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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

AUGUST 1917

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THE BLUE BOOK

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Two Striking Serials

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Some of the most exciting chapters in this great novel of the West when it was really wild occur in this installment. "The Roaring U. P. Trail" is being recognized as the best story the author of "Riders of the Purple Sage," "The Lone Star Ranger" and "The Border Legion" ever wrote.

Alias Mrs. Blair Coulter. By Henry M. Neely 674

Well worth reading even if you have missed the earlier installments is the conclusion of this remarkable story. (Don't forget that it will be followed next month by "Pleasure Island," an especially delightful story by Frank R. Adams, the author of "Taking Care of Sylvia" and "The First Assistant Wife.")

Short Stories You Will Remember

The Wise Old Guy. By Frederick R. Bechdolt 577

Delaney had no friends, but the warden, a wise guy, saved him from the death-cell. Then Delaney—but that's the story, one of the most impressive you ever read.

"Once a Mason—" By Albert Payson Terhune 615

He'd promised his wife he'd have no secrets from her; but he became a Mason and wouldn't tell about it and—oh, that family had a terrible time for a while.

The New Stories of Tarzan. By Edgar Rice Burroughs 624

"Tarzan Rescues the Moon" describes some of the most surprising but typical adventures of this white boy raised among the wild creatures of the jungle.

As Barnum Said— By C. P. Connolly 633

The famous showman's dictum that there's one born every minute is well exemplified by this amusing story of a real-estate "deal."

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MAGAZINE AUGUST 1917

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor.

HEADINGS: Drawn by HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

Free Lances in Diplomacy. By Clarence Herbert New 639

"Overheard in Germany" describes some exciting events among the rebel-minded in Bavaria. If you are not already a Free Lance fan, read this one and then watch events to see if Mr. New has again been a true prophet.

The Brain Marvel. By Clyde A. Bruckman 651

Bill Price was a demon ball-player, but according to some of his team-mates he could put his brains in his shoes and still have room for his feet.

"In the Way to Shur." By Wilbur Hall 659

An Arizona Hagar is the heroine of this remarkable story by the author of "The Littlest Feller" and "The Case of Daniel Case." Watch for Mr. Hall's stories in future issues: he's a "comer."

A Psychological Experiment. By Max Rittenberg 669

A criminal steals deadly disease-germs from a scientist; there ensues a battle of wits for high stakes.

The Cardinal's Signet Ring. By Ellis Parker Butler 693

An exceptionally refreshing story of boys and boyhood, by the man who has won for himself the reputation of being the foremost humorist in America.

Sandy McTeague's Head-Boy. By Maryland Allen 702

The strange voyage of a mission-doctor and his patients in an open boat with a crew of mutinous Solomon Island cannibals.

A Complete Novelette

The Big Town. By W. Carey Wonderly 712

A truly captivating novel, describing the career of a small-town girl who joins the younger Bohemian set in New York—by the man who wrote "Manhattan Mad," "Young Gotham" and "The Chorus Man."

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Frank R. Adams

Author of "Pleasure Island," the Joyous Novel which Begins in Our Next Issue

HEADLINERS FOR NEXT MONTH

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We are enthusiastic about this novelette of Mr. Comfort's. The lure of its mystery and the keen thrill of its many adventures have seldom been equaled.

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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

ON SALE AUGUST 1st

August 1917

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XXV No. 4

The Wise Old Guy

by Frederick R. Bechdolt

THAT night within the shadowed prison walls a light shone from the upper chamber where only those abide who count the too-swift hours between them and the morrow's leap into the great unknown. Outside the walls another light burned, in the Warden's office.

Warden Foley sat alone at the long-distance telephone; he was talking with the far-off Power Behind the Governor, and his voice was fervent. "Tell the Governor," he said, "that I'm asking it as a personal favor. The judge committed an outrage when he sentenced this young fellow to death. He's just a tough rowdy, that's all. These two yeggs got hold of him—Baltimore Yellow and Chi Slim—and pulled him into the job without his really knowing what was up. Then, while they were hard pressed and fleeing, one of them fired a shot—which one, remains an open question. The officers themselves acknowledge that after the killing of the policeman they saw one of the older men pass a gun to Delaney. But Delaney wont talk—that's his idea of honor, you see. He hasn't any friends, and the other two had money for a lawyer. That's why I've got to hang him in the morning. Put it strong to the Governor for me."

The Warden hung up the receiver and wiped his brow; there had been other conversations like this with various intermediaries during the past week, but the light burned in the death-chamber in spite of them all. He sighed and hunted in his desk for the cigar-box, from which he filled his breast pocket before he left the office for the visit which he loathed.

He walked slowly through the rasping gates of steel and crossed the trodden yard under the glaring arc-lamps. His badger-gray head was bowed more than usual when he passed the turnkey, the shotgun guard and the soft-shod inner sentinels who watch the cells. Doggedly, as one who approaches an ugly piece of work, he climbed the stairs, the iron treads of which shone bright from polishing by dead men's feet. At the summit of the flight he stood before a rivet-studded door of steel, upon which he knocked three times with his penknife handle. He heard the death-watch coming on the other side; the portal swung open; and

a flood of yellow lamplight bathed Warden Foley's face, showing the heavy lines and the little beads of sweat above his shaggy brows.

SOME one with his own peculiar idea of the esthetic had done the color-scheme of the chamber; white walls all around, patched with the black window-bars, and in the center a huge cage tinted a delicate robin's-egg blue. Within the cage Delaney sat alone. He glanced up at the new step; there was something in his manner now that suggested he was master of the situation; the other two must look for their cues to him. He smiled; they smiled as with huge relief. He spoke: "Evenin', Warden."

The Warden hurried to the cage door at his word.

"Well, Bill, how are you making it? Got everything you want?" There was solicitude in the Warden's voice, and there was—apology.

Old Shanahan, the death-watch, unlocked the door, saying: "He's fine as a fiddle, aint you, Bill?"

The convict stripes, the bullet head, the face whereon pugnacity was stamped—these were but externals, superficial things; somewhere within there was a presence,—the presence of a soul that hovers on the brink,—and it endowed this young rowdy with a grim black majesty before which the voices of the other two men sank to an undertone. Warden Foley entered the cage, and awkwardly as a boy making his first party call, he took a chair. His hand went to his pocket and came forth full of the expensive cigars. It was noticeable as the cigars changed hands that Delaney's fingers were steady on the eve of this, his first hanging, while the fingers of the man who had had charge of many executions shook.

"Now, Bill, if there's anything you want—" Warden Foley repeated heavily; but the prisoner, who was lighting his cigar, shook his head. "This," he said quietly, "is just about the best I ever smoked." He crossed his legs. "Don't worry, Warden. I aint goin' to give no trouble to youse tomorrow mornin'. Things is goin' off dead smooth, as far as I got anything to do wit' them."

"Sure," the Warden agreed fervently. "I know you'll hold up your end, Bill." And then to Shanahan: "Bring me a glass of water, Mike. I've smoked too much to-day, and I've a damned frog in my throat."

Outside, according to the old custom of the prison, the guards began calling the hour. From afar the grim announcement came faint-toned and swelled as it approached: "Ten o'clock, and all's well!" Then it died away.

WARDEN FOLEY drank his ice-water, and Delaney puffed contentedly on his cigar; there was a dignity in his calmness, the dignity of one who walks hand in hand with gray Death and does not flinch. "What," he demanded finally, "is new outside? Think we're a-goin' to have a war?"

He hearkened politely as the Warden retailed the day's tidings. On the stove beyond the tinted bars a pot of coffee was steaming fragrantly; Shanahan, old in the service of those about to die, poured himself a full cup against the coming of the late watches of the night.

And now, as the Warden and Delaney talked, the calling of another fleeting hour came from the yard. There was a pause; as one who strives to relieve his companion from the situation's awkwardness, the prisoner picked up the broken thread of conversation. It was quite evident that during the progress of the ordeal which the law's workings had imposed on all of them, Delaney intended to hold up his own end. Somehow that very fact contributed to the dryness of the Warden's throat and helped him to remember that this bullet-headed young fellow had not seen a visitor or received a letter since the court had sent him here.

The bell of the telephone which connected the chamber with the rest of the prison tinkled, and Shanahan rose from his chair. While he was taking down the receiver, there was another heavy pause within the cell. Shanahan turned his head: "Wanted, Warden, on long-distance in the captain of the guard's office," he announced.

By virtue of the repression which had kept him well poised through this evening's visit, Warden Foley managed to get to his feet with a semblance of leisurely indifference. "I'll see you later, Bill," he said. And Delaney merely nodded; for Delaney had no friends; his lawyer had abandoned his case long since. The Warden hurried from the room.

DOWN the long polished flight, through silent corridors and across the yard upon the beaten surface of which the arc-lights rained their chemical glare, the Warden strode. He passed the barred portal which shuts a striped population from the outer world. Within the captain of the guard's office, he swore under his breath while soprano voices babbled over wire connections—until, when his fingers had moistened the receiver which they clasped, he heard the Power Behind the Governor at the other end saying: "As a personal favor to you, he's promised to do it. The paper's signed by now." The Warden sighed heavily, hung up the receiver and departed from the office with a swinging stride.

When Shanahan opened the rivet-studded door of the death-chamber and heard the Warden's voice, he understood. Delaney also heard that new tone and stepped quickly to the bars of robin's-egg blue. His eyes met the Warden's eyes, and now as Foley addressed him, it was in the manner of one whose words demand obedience: "Better get your blankets together, Delaney."

The convict nodded comprehendingly, but he said no word; save for the peculiar dilation of the pupils of his eyes, his face remained unchanged, except that it became a little whiter. Nor did he give any other sign of the great question which was in his mind. But the Warden hastened to answer that question: "Better than a reprieve; the Governor's consented to commute your sentence to life imprisonment."

Delaney lingered within the tinted cage to hunt for his briar pipe, and Shanahan took advantage of the delay to whisper to the Warden: "How'd he come to do it, anyhow? This fellow hasn't a friend on earth." Foley smiled grimly. "I crowded him pretty hard myself during the past ten days," he said.

Delaney stepped out from the cell which he had not expected to leave until they gave him his new black suit in the morning. He started for the outer door, and there he paused. Now it was Delaney who was embarrassed, the Warden who was master of the situation; the convict spoke lamely, haltingly: "Thank you, Warden. I'm sure—I'm much obliged." With that he left the death-chamber.

WARDEN FOLEY was halfway across the prison yard. The buildings loomed around him shadowed, still. The thick silence of sleep lay upon the whole place.

A guard called midnight near the lower gate, and the proclamation of the hour came marching on from wall and court and alleyway; then silence reigned again, until perhaps ten seconds had passed, when the stillness was rent asunder. Metallic clangor shook the night breeze, and the stone walls bandied echoings of shrieks.

Warden Foley paused. An instant of respite followed, during which the prison could be heard to stir in waking. Abruptly the tumult began again; and the Warden retraced his steps to the cell-house from which he had emerged a few moments before.

A guard opened the door. "Those two yeggs who came in with Delaney!" The guard's voice was barely audible through the noise which swept down the corridor. "The cell-tender heard them framing it: They figure on to-morrow's hanging to start a riot."

Warden Foley nodded. "You throw the levers," he ordered. "I'll take them out."

The cells were on the second tier; the Warden stood before them while the guard took his place at the steel box which houses the lock-controlling levers. The huge bolts slid free. "Come out," said Warden Foley.

In the lull which followed his command the whole cell-house moved as a man moves when he is rudely roused from sleep; and down the corridors

there came vague mutterings; sibilant whispers floated through the bars all about. The Warden hearkened, for he understood the tension that filled the air, the presence like the sultriness which hangs under a storm-cloud. Baltimore Yellow and Chi Slim also listened expectantly, and listening, heard no respondent spirit giving voice. They came forth sullenly.

The Warden led them out and onward across the yard to the basement of the same bleak building upon the topmost floor of which he had sweated half an hour before with the condemned man. Here another rivet-studded door exuded a tenuous fringe of light; and when the guard had opened it, the glow of an incandescent within revealed a concrete hallway lined on either side by blank dungeon doors of steel.

"Put them in," Warden Foley told the guard. "When they send out word they're willing to let the other men sleep, they can get back their cells, and —they can eat again." He watched the guard turn the locks upon them before he recrossed the yard on his way to the outer gate.

The Warden's house was on the hill; a light was burning on the upper floor; his wife was waiting here. She always waited for him on those Thursday nights when the death-chamber held a tenant. He kissed her, and he saw the marks of tears upon her cheek. "It's all right, Margaret," he said. "The Governor commuted him."

She nodded and strove against the tightness of her throat. "I saw the light go out a half-hour ago," she whispered. "But—you didn't come."

His shaggy brows grew heavier. "I had to put two yeggs in the hole," he told her; and then, to change the tenor of her thoughts: "But we haven't Delaney ahead of us in the morning. Let's go to sleep on that."

DOWN in black darkness Baltimore Yellow and Chi Slim crouched and talked through the walls of steel which separated them. Back in the county jail various inmates of the felony ward had told them of this prison, as Warden Foley had made it over during his régime. "An easy pen'," said these connoisseurs, "a rest-cure; that's what it is."

And their lawyer had congratulated them on the day when sentence was passed, saying: "You boys will have no trouble getting on over there." According to their lights they had interpreted these words; and interpreting, they had now come to grief. The chagrin which was eating at their hearts became more corrosive as the hours wore on. "We'll get the Warden, an' we'll get him right," they told each other. "We'll get him if we got to wait ten years."

Perhaps they might have forgotten the promise, but on the day when they came forth into the trampled yard, a grizzled old-timer sidled up to them. "Next time you tough guys try to rib a cell-house riot," he said, "on the strength of a hanging, you better make sure the hanging's coming off." Some one laughed, and the two yeggs looked up to see themselves surrounded by a circle of grinning faces.

So their hatred toward the Warden lived; and living, it gained more food for growth. For now, while young Delaney, grateful for the boon of life and owned by a huge, dumb wistfulness for the freedom which he fancied he might some day earn by parole, was holding to that rigid repression which makes a man a model prisoner, these two, his companions in his first crime, were becoming famous as the prison troublemakers. The dungeons held them as habitual guests; the solitary cells knew them well. That dream of getting Warden Foley became more purposeful.

ONE day chance combined the mutations of State politics and the ailments of a carburetor to bring opportunity to Baltimore Yellow and Chi Slim. A new governor remade the board of prison directors; and the guard who drove the three new board-members to the railroad after their first meeting took along the garage trusty to diagnose his engine-trouble for him.

That afternoon in the jute-mill Baltimore Yellow gave Chi Slim a meaning glance, and the latter bent over his loom with unusual assiduity. The astonished

door-guard saw these two reporting off among the earliest who finished their tasks.

They met in an unfrequented corner of the lower yard. "Well," Chi Slim demanded, "w'at did you give me the office fer?"

"Listen," Baltimore Yellow said, "to w'at the garage trusty spilled to the loom-boss an' the loom-boss spilled to me." He looked around for possible eavesdroppers. "It's like this," he resumed in an undertone: "The new governor don't like the Warden, but Foley is too strong to tie the can to, without there's some good excuse. So the three d'rectors that's just been swore in are goin' to investigate this pen'."

Chi Slim spat noisily against the wall. "W'at if they do?"

Baltimore Yellow allowed a moment's silence to intervene, during which the guard walked past them on the summit of the wall. "Them three," he said, "have framed it up to come over here one day ahead of the next board-meetin', when nobody's lookin' fer 'em. They're goin' to see if there aint somethin' crooked inside the walls. Now, all we got to do is fix it so's there *is* somethin' wrong."

"W'at you want to do then?" Chi Slim asked quickly. "Last time you pulled me on, I got my bellyful of trouble."

"We're goin' to rib a riot," Baltimore announced.

His companion shook his head vigorously. "I mind that one we tried in the cell-house the night Delaney ought to of been hung."

"We're goin' to rib a riot," Baltimore repeated, "in the dinin'-hall, when the Warden brings them three directors to see the con's eat—the way they always do. We'll fix it fer 'em so they'll see all hell break loose."

"But me an' you," Chi Slim broke in, "—they'll grab us, quick as the first plate is throwed."

Baltimore Yellow grinned. "I said we was goin' to *rib* a riot, didn't I? That don't mean we got to be there when it comes off. There's that bunch of first-time losers in Number Two Cell-house; we'll pass the word to them —these young con's is always growlin' about the grub. They'll do the rest. We'll lay back an' rib them on the quiet. But when the thing comes off, we'll be outa sight—in the clear."

AS Warden Foley was leaving his big house on the hill a few mornings later, his wife reached up and grasped his coat lapels. "You're worrying too much," she said. "There's something wrong inside."

He smiled. "I wish the inside of this pen' was all that bothered me," he told her. "It's the Governor."

"You don't think— Surely they're not after your job, with all you've done here!" Her eyes were wide with incredulity.

"When a man's drawing six thousand a year," he said grimly, "there are sure to be plenty who think they could do better by the State. The Governor knows I voted against him."

When he had reached his office, he opened the morning papers which the runner had laid on his desk. A headline on the first page made his shaggy brows grow heavier. He read down the column:

> The likelihood of a shake-up in the Bayville penitentiary. . . . . The statement comes on high authority. . . . . A feeling that the administration of Warden Foley is weak. . . . . Rumors of trouble inside the prison walls, the news of which has been suppressed by the authorities. . . . . The new board members are desirous of probing matters. . . . .

"I guess they're after me," the Warden mused.

JUST then a knock sounded on the office door. The runner entered. "Two prisoners from Number Two Cell-house to see you, Warden. They say they're a committee."

"All right—tell them to come in." Warden Foley's eyes involuntarily roved to the black headlines, and during the interval between the trusty's departure and the arrival of the visitors, he carefully turned the paper inside out.

The delegation from Number Two Cell-house entered abruptly, as if they had something before them which they wanted to finish as soon as possible. They were hard-featured young men,

typical specimens of that element which helps to turn the hair of wardens gray —graduates of saloon side entrances and city workhouses, who enter their first prison experience with a large hatred for blue uniforms and a sublime faith in their own toughness. Warden Foley looked into their faces.

"Humph!" he mused. "Monk Daly and the Wop!" And then, aloud: "You two are just down from solitary, aren't you?"

The eyes of the twain shifted toward the carpet as they acknowledged the truth of the statement with a mutual nod. Monk Daly was the first to speak. His bullet head swung back, and there was a forward thrust to his jaw.

"We're a c'mittee from Number Two Cell-house, Warden. We come wit' a petition." His words followed one another as closely as those of a schoolboy reciting his first declamation. "The food in the dinin'-room is got so bad these last few mont's, it's hard to stand, an' it's gettin' worst. There was ten in the cell-house has to go to the hospital this week to get doped up, along of the monotony of the diet—"

"The what?" Warden Foley allowed his curiosity to get the better of him.

"The monotony of the diet," Monk Daly repeated surely. "No change. Get me, Warden? Beans t'ree times a day, an' seven days a week."

Warden Foley sighed. It was evident that Monk Daly had been schooled by some one who thoroughly understood the vulnerable spot in a prison régimen, for he had named the one item on the bill of fare whose mention is sure to wring curses from the lips of men, be they convicts, soldiers or loggers—the one item also, the removal of which would raise a riot in barracks, logging-camp or penitentiary.

"An' we come," Monk Daly continued briskly, "to ask youse, Warden, if youse would be kind enough to make a change fer us." He paused with a jerk of intaken breath, and the pair remained silent, regarding the Warden with hard eyes.

Warden Foley turned his back on them and bent over his desk. "You two," said he, "go back to work. The grub's all right."

WHEN they had departed, he picked up the paper and read that first-page story through again. "Fine mess if some one should start a real ruction over the food," he muttered, "with this attack on now!"

That noon he visited the dining-room while two thousand convicts filed in and took their seats. They faced one way at their narrow tables, and as their arms moved at the meal, it was like the stirring which a breeze makes on the surface of a sea. Here and there a dot of blue on the particolored expanse, a guard walked swinging his heavy cane, the only weapon he carried against possible attack. In the two galleries at the opposite ends of the hall another pair of guards stood looking down upon the throng, their loaded rifles ready on their arms.

The guards knew, as well as the convicts knew, their utter futility against any semblance of concerted action in that room. And there was not one in that multitude who at some time had not experienced the longing to rise and fight his way to freedom—not one but loathed the sight of the tables and the surrounding walls, the odor of the heavy pans of food, the steam of which rose before them three times a day.

As Warden Foley stood in the entrance watching them, he found himself speculating on how small a movement it needed to lash this stirring sea of striped forms into a storm, to bring upon them where they sat a mob's insanity.

The meal went on to its completion; a floor-guard raised his cane; at once the multitude arose and departed in single file. The steward came to Warden Foley's side. "I hear," he said, "there's been a kick against the grub." And then: "Queer how such things take hold; there's a good quarter of them off their feed already." He pointed to the waiters filing out into the kitchen as they cleared away, and the Warden saw the laden pans which they were carrying.

That afternoon word went around the prison that a petition from Number Two Cell-house for better food had been rejected. The news had its effect. By the time of first lock-up, old-timers

who should have known better from past experience found themselves cursing their diet as earnestly as the young prisoners. "Beans," said they, "and then more beans. Wonder w'at the Warden thinks our bellies are made out of, anyway."

At breakfast the next morning a good three-quarters of the population was, to quote the steward, off its feed. A change had come into the atmosphere of the dining-hall; there was a vague expectancy spreading like an epidemic over the place. And once, when a waiter dropped a laden pan, ten men leaped from their benches as suddenly as if the noise had been a shot.

MONK DALY slunk by roundabout ways to the appointed rendezvous and saw Baltimore Yellow and Chi Slim awaiting him. As the newcomer joined them, the latter took his station off to one side where he could watch against eavesdropping guards. Baltimore did the talking in an undertone.

"To-morrow," he said, "the d'rectors will come. They're goin' t'rough the dinin'-hall at noon."

Monk Daly grinned unpleasantly. "My bunch will tear the place to pieces when the trouble starts. An' as quick as the d'rectors show, there's twenty of us ready to begin it by smashin' dishes. You just give the signal—"

"Listen," Baltimore Yellow broke in: "Youse don't want to wait fer any signal off of me. The signal's w'en the Warden brings them t'ree d'rectors inside the door."

There might have been discussion on this point, but Chi Slim called softly from his station, and the trio separated as Warden Foley entered Death Alley at the other end. He had been watching the prison more closely than usual during these past two weeks, and his eyes took in the identity of the departing prisoners.

WHEN Warden Foley found the three new members of the board in his office on coming to work the next morning, he masked his surprise with quick hospitality.

"We dropped in," the chairman informed him a little stiffly, "to take a look at the prison before to-morrow's meeting."

"The place is yours," the Warden answered quietly. And with that, he took them to the main gate. When he had passed them through, "I'll come inside," he said, "and meet you in time to take you to lunch."

They were sincere men, as politicians go, and they genuinely believed the things which had been told them since the Governor had named them for places on the board; but now they looked at one another in surprise. "He doesn't act as if he were afraid of anything we'd find," the chairman murmured. "Well, gentlemen, let's see what there is to see."

There was much to see of interest but not of profit to the errand which had brought them here. Warden Foley's processes of reform had not been accompanied by blazonry in public prints, and they met more surprises as they went on. Because they were imbued with the conviction that their quest for trouble would not be in vain, their progress was frequently delayed by interviews with prisoners; and—

"Seems to me as if all of these fellows are bragging about their work," the chairman announced finally.

"Or looking for a chance to tell how unjust the juries were with them," another of the trio added gloomily. "That's all they seem to be worrying about here. They pester a man to death telling about their cases."

They were leaving the jute-mill at the time, and if they had but known it, turning their backs on the hotbed of the insurrection which had been so carefully brewed for their benefit. But nature's famous first law works very potently inside prison walls, and more than one young inmate of Number Two Cell-house had yielded to the instinct of self-preservation which bade him make a good impression in the hope that these visitors might recall his face at a later date.

"See them young hood's tryin' to square themselves?" Chi Slim growled, passing Baltimore Yellow's clacking loom. "They'd throw down their own brothers if they thought they could make parole by doin' it."

"Now!" said Baltimore. "The guard's watchin' us." With this the two yeggs clinched and rolled upon the jute-mill floor. The members of the board were passing out of the main doorway, and the noise of the machinery drowned the sounds of combat. By the time the guards had succeeded in separating the pair, the directors were well on their way toward the foundry.

"Why in 'ell couldn't you of gimme the word a minute sooner?" Chi Slim demanded as they went to the office of the yard-captain for punishment. "Them t'ree would of had somethin' to think about instid of the oofty-goofty talk they got from parole-hunters."

"They'll get enough to keep 'em busy thinkin' w'en they come into the dinin'-hall this noon," Baltimore replied. "They put that green guard in the gallery this mornin', an' he's just scared enough to start shootin' the minute the first trouble comes. Come on—it's me an' you fer the hole, where we're in the clear."

WITHIN an hour the long striped lines were filing from jute-mill, factory and all the other centers of prison industry, to the enormous dining-hall. They marched through the main doorway, and they took their places. Sprinkled among the throng which occupied the benches, the two hundred convicts from Number Two Cell-house turned their eyes to the doorway which they had just entered, awaiting the appearance of Warden Foley and the three members of the board.

What faint hopes any had cherished on the strength of their recent interviews with those visitors were already forgotten in the grim expectancy which owned them as they bided the arrival which would be the signal for them to begin smashing everything within their reach. Over the multitude and permeating the air which they were breathing spread that strange, tense presence, half panic and half murder, which owns a mob. Nine tenths of them were peaceably disposed, anxious to abide by the prison rules, and yet that presence grew more potent until it was ready to sweep the room and drive men to their deaths.

Warden Foley entered the main prison gate and went to the office of the captain of the yard. "Better send a trusty down and hurry up the directors," he said. "I want to take them through the dining-hall before the lines begin to leave."

The captain of the yard turned to the convict who served as his runner. "Delaney," he said, "go and tell them to come. And," he added as an afterthought, "while you're down there, you'd better put bread and water in the dark-cells for those two men I sent in from the mill."

DELANEY took the bunch of heavy keys which fitted the dungeon doors from their glass case on the wall and hurried across the yard to the basement of that bleak building upon the topmost floor of which he had awaited death two years before. The lines on his face were deeper now than they had been that night, for he had been waiting long and patiently; there was a dumb wistfulness in his eyes. He had been living for the far-off day when he could come petitioning the prison board for his parole, living with a carefulness which only those know who have striven for clean records in a penitentiary. Gradually he had come to a position of trust. So now he was the captain's runner—custodian of those heavy keys which had so often locked his two one-time companions in darkness.

He found the three directors in the lower yard and delivered the captain's message; he saw them hurrying after him toward the office as he retraced his own steps as far as the entrance of the dungeons. Here he paused and unlocked the rivet-studded door.

Baltimore Yellow and Chi Slim heard him through encircling walls of steel. In the soundless dark of the narrow cubicles wherein they lay, time had been passing, how slowly they had no means of knowing, though they were well accustomed to this blank environment. Impatience had begun to gnaw upon their hearts, and as they caught the footfall in the narrow corridor, they hailed Delaney eagerly.

"Hey! Delaney! You!" they both

called at once. "W'at's doin', anyhow? W'at time is it now?"

"Noon hour," he told them, "an' nothin' stirrin'." He picked up two small pans and two metal jugs in which to bring the ration which the prison rule prescribed. Then, with the dishes in his hands, he turned scowling toward the blank doors. "Cheese that noise," he shouted. "W'at's got into youse?"

The two of them had begun beating upon the steel, and now the clamor ceased as abruptly as it had begun. "Delaney," Baltimore Yellow called, "give us a stall outside. W'en you see the Warden and the d'rectors go into the dinin'-hall, leave us know."

Delaney dropped one of his jugs on the concrete floor.

A MAN in prison soon learns to draw swift conclusions from small facts, and he had listened with large interest to the rumors which had penetrated the office of the captain of the yard during the past two weeks. "W'at," he demanded when he had moistened his lips, "is on in the dinin'-hall?"

"Never you mind w'at," Baltimore called through the steel door. "Just you pipe off the main entrance. You'll see w'at, when Foley shows his face inside."

Delaney glided toward the rivet-studded portal which opened from the narrow corridor into the yard. Within he halted long enough to see, in his mind's eye, the climax of that conspiracy the entirety of which had flashed before him. The three men entering the dining-hall, the sudden stir among that sea of striped forms, the first yell of hate, the ensuing crash, the chaos of overturned tables and flying dishes. It seemed to him as if he could hear the soft, ugly thud of blows on flesh, the sharp crack of the first shot—as if he could smell the hot blood on the floor.

And then his mind leaped back two years. He heard the Warden's voice again as he had heard it then: "All right, Delaney! You'd better get your blankets together." Again his throat swelled and his chest grew tight, as when he had striven to give words to his gratitude that night.

"I gotta stop it," he whispered to himself.

Back of him, within their cells, the two yeggs were pounding on the steel doors. "Tell us, Delaney," they importuned.

He knew how surely they would kill him, how long they would wait if waiting should be necessary. The creed by which he had lived all these years, the creed which places obloquy on his name who betrays a companion to the law, stood out before him; and when he closed his eyes he saw it as if some one had written it in letters of vivid light. They had come with him here to serve time for the same crime.

Delaney groaned. "If there was only some other way," he whispered to himself.

THE three directors had halted after passing the dungeon door on their way to the office of the captain of the yard. The clangor of beaten steel drew them back toward that rivet-studded portal. Altogether it had been a fruitless morning, but—

"This, I take it, should be the entrance to the punishment cells," the chairman said.

"The Warden," one of his companions suggested, "says we'll have to hurry if we want to see them at their dinner."

"Perhaps," the chairman smiled. "But we're investigating in our own way, you know. Maybe there'll be something interesting here."

Delaney stepped forth from the entrance to the punishment ward, and the repression which had made it possible for him to walk within the limitations of prison rules for two years helped to keep his face expressionless as he bowed to them.

"We'd like to take a look inside there," the chairman told him, and Delaney stood rigid while they passed him. When the last of them had gone inside, he softly closed the rivet-studded door upon them, and turned the key without a sound. Then he walked briskly away in the direction of the lower yard.

"I've lost out," he told himself. "I'm

in bad wit' 'em all. No parole fer me, an' them two will croak me when they get a chancet." But as he faced the bitter facts and saw the overthrow of all his patient hopes, his head went back, for he had kept his self-respect —he was no informer, anyway.

WITHIN the great dining-hall two thousand convicts sat, while the epidemic of restlessness which had raged among them for two weeks attained its climax. Two hundred stripe-clad young rebels watched the wide outer door, trembling with eagerness. It still lacked fifteen minutes of the hour when the multitude should leave the place. Monk Daly whispered to the Wop: "Aint they never goin' to come?"

Down in the lower yard Delaney smoked a cigarette and wondered why the minutes dragged so slowly. "They're sure to come an' get me before the lines march out. Then it's all off, anyhow." He sweated as he realized that even now the search for the missing directors must be in progress, somewhere around the corner of that bleak building which hid him from the captain's office.

On the veranda before the office of the yard-captain Warden Foley paced back and forth, awaiting tidings from the guards who had been sent out to solve the mystery. After the disquieting incidents of the past two weeks, the disappearance of the three directors within the prison walls had ugly possibilities.

Three figures appeared from behind the corner of the bleak building across the yard. Two of them were clad in blue, and one wore the striped garb of a convict. There was, in the movements of this one, a reluctance which was visible from where the Warden stood, as if the prisoner were striving, with all his might, to delay the progress of his two custodians. The Warden called the yard-captain.

"We found him down in the lower yard smoking a cigarette," one of the guards explained, and he held Delaney's collar in his right hand while he spoke. With his left hand he gave Warden Foley the heavy bunch of keys. "We took these off of him, when he was trying to toss them over the wall." It was evident from Delaney's dishevelment that the feat had not been accomplished without some difficulty.

Delaney spoke, but although he addressed the Warden, his eyes remained fixed on the entrance of the dining-hall. "Honest, Warden," he said, "I aint seen nothin' of them t'ree d'rectors."

THE eyes of Warden Foley followed the direction of Delaney's gaze, and then—because he had learned long since to piece small things together, making large facts from them—his mind went swiftly over various incidents. He watched Delaney narrowly and spoke to the captain of the yard.

"Send a man down to the dungeon; he's locked the directors in there." His eyes searched Delaney's eyes. "We'll have plenty of time to take them through the dining-hall before the meal is over."

The eyes of Delaney swerved abruptly from that entrance on which they had been hanging, and as they met the Warden's, they were beseeching. Already a guard was hurrying toward the rivet-studded door in the basement of that bleak building across the yard. Little drops of sweat broke out on Delaney's forehead.

Warden Foley smiled grimly at the sight, and now as he recalled that visit of the delegation from Number Two Cell-house, along with the Death Alley conference which he had seen the day before, he turned to the yard-captain again. His voice was crisper than it had been. "Take a bunch of guards to the dining-room," he said, "and search the lines as they come out. Bring Monk Daly and the Wop over to your office, and tell them you want to know who's been ribbing them, before you punish them. I'll take the directors up to the house to lunch now."

So, while the Warden and the three members of the board departed through the main gate, the members of that great throng within the dining-hall arose from their benches; and as they filed toward the open air, they saw the handful of blue-clad guards just outside the doorway, deftly feeling every

man's striped clothing for weapons as he passed. And then the restlessness which had owned the multitude, the dissatisfaction which had so gradually worked to its climax where savagery was ready to break forth, oozed swiftly away and was succeeded by a universal feeling of relief, as when a man finds himself snatched from the brink of a precipice hitherto unseen by him.

A feeling of relief on a much smaller scale was making itself evident in the dining-room of the Warden's house an hour later. The Warden's wife had seen to it that the lunch was excellent; the good-natured badinage which had followed their dungeon experience had done its share toward making the three directors look less critically at their host. Their disappointment over the fruitlessness of their morning's inspection began to wear away — political debts easily fall into the category of nuisances, especially if they are hard to pay. After all, it was much pleasanter to ask this quiet-spoken shaggy-browed man about the improvements which he had brought within those gray walls than it would have been to browbeat him regarding ill conditions there.

Toward the close of the meal the chairman reverted to their misadventure behind the rivet-studded door. "That young trusty who forgot about us and locked us in, Warden," he asked. "Who is he, anyway?"

Warden Foley told the story of Delaney's crime, very much as he had told it that first night to the Power Behind the Governor.

"Hum!" The chairman cleared his throat. "What did you do with him—for his carelessness to-day?"

Warden Foley's face tightened a little. "I put him into solitary confinement," he answered gravely. "I mean to keep him there for some time."

WHILE the slow months during which Warden Foley came to a better and more complete understanding with his new prison-board wore on, Delaney remained alone, in a square cage, where there was no other prisoner with whom to speak, no sight of any man save the watchful guard. With his thoughts for his sole company he remained here.

One day, when the board was assembling to meet for the consideration of paroles, the trusties whose duties kept them in the Warden's office-building were seating the line of applicants. These trusties heard the voices of the Warden and the chairman of the board, inside the latter's office; they were discussing some of the more notable cases which were to come before them, cases the solution of which depended largely on the judgment of the prison officials. But though the trusties pricked up their ears, they could not distinguish what was said, until suddenly Warden Foley raised his voice and his words became distinct—remarkably distinct.

"As to Delaney," he was saying, "I remain unalterably opposed to his being granted a parole." Then the voice died away to a mutter again.

Prison gossip flies fast. Baltimore Yellow met Chi Slim in the lower yard that afternoon, and he told it as it had been told to him. "Now," he concluded, "you c'n plant that file knife; we wont use it on Delaney, an' we aint a-goin' to lay fer him when we get out of stir. He was square wit' us. If he hadn't been on the level, if he'd got next to w'at was comin' off that day an' locked them t'ree in the hole to save a riot, d'you think Foley would be handin' him that bunch of solitary an' then fightin' the hull board against his parole? Not much. An' you c'n bet the Warden's got the straight of it—for he's a wise old guy."

The last statement was the truth. Delaney knew that too. And Delaney, departing from the prison to the liberty which the board had granted him against the Warden's opposition, and to a life unmenaced by those two who had suspected him, passed close enough to Warden Foley to say—so low that none overheard: "Thank you, Warden —I'm sure—I'm much obliged."

WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT, author of "Down Among Men," "Red Fleece" and other noted stories, has written a delightful novelette for THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. Watch for it in our next—the September—issue, on sale August 1st.

The Roaring U.P. Trail

by Zane Grey

(Events of the first installments:)

SOON after the Civil War, in 1865, a party of engineers were at work in the Black Hills on a survey as hazardous as it was problematical. They had charge of the laying of the Union Pacific Railroad.

This party, escorted by a number of United States troops under Colonel Dillon, had encountered difficulties almost insurmountable. And now they were halted by a seemingly impassable barrier—a gorge too deep to fill, too wide to bridge. General Lodge, chief engineer, ordered:

"Put young Neale on the job."

Young Neale was put on the job; and he made good, though he all but broke his neck doing it and owed his life to the help of his friend Larry King, a cowboy.

For his fine work Neale was promoted. The survey was pushed on; and then one day the really great adventure of Neale's life began. For not far from the surveying crew a little party of eastbound travelers was stopped at dusk one night by a trapper named Slingerland, who told them a band of hostile Sioux was trailing them. Slingerland rode on to get help of the soldiers and surveyors, while the travelers made a fort of their wagons, and the leader, a man named Horn, buried a store of gold he was bringing back from California.

Among the travelers were two women —Mrs. Durade and her daughter Allie, a girl of sixteen; and before the Indian attack, Mrs. Durade made a confession to her daughter.

"I ran off with Durade before you were born," Mrs. Durade told her daughter. "Durade is not your father! Your name is Lee. Your father is Allison Lee. I've heard he's a rich man now. Oh! I want to get back—to give you to him—to beg forgiveness.

"We were married in New Orleans in 1847. My father made me marry him. I never loved Allison Lee. I met Durade, a Spaniard—a blue-blooded adventurer. I ran off with him to California. You were born out there in 1850. . . . . It has been a hard life. Lately I could endure it no longer. I've run off from Durade."

"Oh, Mother, I knew we were running off from him!" cried Allie breathlessly. "And I know he will follow."

"Indeed, I fear he will," replied the mother. . . . . I was Durade's slave."

"Then why did you run away? He was kind—good to us."

"Allie, listen: Durade was a gambler—a man crazy to gamble. He did not love gold, but he loved games of chance. He was a crooked gambler. He made me share in his guilt. My face lured miners to his dens! Thank God I left him—before it was too late—for you!"

And then the yells of the attacking Sioux cut short Mrs. Durade's story.

WHEN Slingerland rode into the camp of the surveyors and told of the beleaguered travelers near by, Neale and King rode with the soldiers to the rescue. But at first it seemed they were too late, for they found only charred ashes and mutilated bodies. Neale, King and Slingerland lingered after the soldiers had left, however; and under a ledge of rock they came on a young girl, unconscious but still alive, sole survivor of the massacre.

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They took the girl to Slingerland's cabin, and there she gradually came to herself. The shock of the massacre had been terrible, however, and for the most part she remained in a state of apathy.

Neale was detailed to pass the winter in this vicinity in order to take observations of the snowfall.

He lived at Slingerland's cabin, and the time passed happily, for Allie blossomed into new health and beauty; when in the spring Neale went back to his work with the construction survey, he left Allie engaged to him.

A busy summer followed, in the course of which Larry and Neale each saved the other's life in exciting adventures. Fall brought a bitter disappointment, for Neale was ordered to Omaha and was unable to visit Allie at Slingerland's.

In the Omaha office Neale came into collision with the forces of graft. One of his surveys was declared faulty and the construction work ordered done over again—simply for the additional profits of the repeated construction. Neale protested, but in vain.

When spring came, Neale threw up his work in Omaha and left for the frontier again. With Larry he journeyed to Slingerland's cabin—and found only an abandoned heap of charred embers.

(The story now follows in detail.)

CHAPTER X

AFTER Neale and Larry left, Slingerland saw four seasons swing round, in which no visitors violated the loneliness of his valley.

All this while he did not leave Allie Lee alone—or at least out of hearing. When he went to tend his traps or to hunt, to chop wood or to watch the trail, Allie always accompanied him. She grew strong and supple; she could walk far and carry a rifle or pack; she was keen of eye and ear, and she loved the wilds; she not only was of help to him, but she made the time pass swiftly.

When a year passed after the departure of Neale and Larry King, it seemed to Slingerland that they would never return. There was peril in the trails these days. He grew more and more convinced of some fatality, but he did not confide his fears to Allie. She was happy and full of trust; every day, almost every hour, she looked for Neale. The long wait did not drag her down;

she was as fresh and hopeful as ever, and the rich bloom mantled her cheek. Slingerland had not the heart to cast a doubt into her happiness. He let her live her dreams.

There came a day that spring when it was imperative for him to visit a distant valley, where he had left traps he now needed, and as th distance was long and time short, he decided to go alone. Allie laughed at the idea of being unsafe at the cabin.

"I can take care of myself," she said. "I'm not afraid."

Slingerland scarcely doubted her. She had nerve, courage; she knew how to use a gun, and underneath her softness and tenderness was a spirit that would not flinch at anything. Still, he did not feel satisfied with the idea of leaving her alone, and it was with a wrench that he did it now.

Moreover he was longer at the journey than he had anticipated being. The moment he turned his face homeward, a desire to hurry, an anxiety, a dread, fastened upon him. A presentiment of evil gathered. But incumbered as he was with heavy traps, he could not travel swiftly. It was late afternoon when he topped the last ridge between him and home.

WHAT Slingerland saw caused him to drop his traps and gaze aghast. A heavy column of smoke rose above the valley. His first thought was of Sioux. But he doubted that the Indians would betray his friendship. The cabin had caught fire by accident, or else wandering desperadoes had happened along to ruin him. But he was not one to conjecture or to make despair over he knew not what. He ran down the slope, stole down to the group of pines, and under cover, cautiously, approached the spot where his cabin had stood.

It was a heap of smoking logs, and probably had burned for hours. There was no sign of Allie or of anyone. Then he ran into the glade. Almost at once he saw boot-tracks and hoof-tracks; pelts and hides and furs lay scattered around, as if they had been discarded for choicer ones.

"Robbers!" muttered Slingerland. "An' they've got the lass!"

He shook under the roughest blow he had ever been dealt; his conscience flayed him; his distress over Allie's fate was so keen and unfamiliar that, used as he was to prompt decision and action, he remained there for a time, staring at the ruins of his home.

Presently he roused himself. He had no hopes. He knew the nature of men who had done this deed. But it was possible that he might overtake them. In the dust he found four sizes of boot-tracks, and he took the trail down the valley.

Then Slingerland became aware that a storm was imminent and that the air had become cold and raw. Rain began to fall, and darkness came quickly. He sought the shelter of a near-by ledge, and there, hungry, cold, wet and unhappy he waited for sleep that would not come.

It rained hard all night, and by morning the brook had become a yellow flood and the trail was under water. Toward noon the rain turned to a drizzly snow and finally ceased. Slingerland passed on down the valley, searching for tracks. The ground everywhere had been washed clean and smooth. When he reached the old St. Vrain and Laramie Trail, it looked as if a horse had not passed there in months. He spent another wretched night, and next day awoke to the necessities of life. Except for his rifle and his horses, and a few traps back up in the hills, he had nothing to show for years of hard and successful work. But that did not matter. He had begun with as little, and he could begin again. He killed meat, satisfied his hunger and cooked more that he might carry with him. Then he spent two more days in that locality, until he had crossed every outlet from his valley. Not striking a track, he saw nothing but defeat.

THAT moment was bitter.

"If Neale'd happen along hyar now, he'd kill me—an' sarve me right," muttered the trapper.

But he believed that Neale also had gone the way of so many who had braved these wilds. Slingerland saw in the fate of Neale and Allie the result

of civilization marching westward. If he before had disliked the idea of the railroad entering his wild domain, now he hated it. Before that survey the Indians had been peaceful, and no dangerous men rode the trails. What right had the Government to steal land from the Indians—to break treaties, to run a steam-track across the plains and mountains? Slingerland foresaw the bloodiest period ever known in the West, before that work should be completed. It had struck him deep—this white-man movement across the Black Hills, and it was not the loss of all he had worked for that he minded. For years his life had been lonely, and then suddenly it had been full. Never again would it be either.

Slingerland turned his back to the trail made by the advancing march of the empire-builders, and he sought the seclusion of the more inaccessible hills.

"Some day I'll work out with a load of pelts," he said. "An' then—mebbe I'll hyar what become of Neale—an' her."

He found, as one of his kind knew how to find, the valleys where no white man had trod — where the game abounded and was tame, where if the red man came he was friendly, where the silent days and lonely nights slowly made more bearable his memory of Allie Lee.

CHAPTER XI

ALLIE LEE possessed a mind at once active and dreamy. While she dreamed of Neale and their future, she busied herself with many tasks and many activities, and a whole year flew by without a lagging or melancholy hour.

Neale had been detained or sent back to Omaha, or given more important work than formerly. She divined Slingerland's doubt, but it would not stay before her consciousness. Her heart told her that all was well with Neale, and that sooner or later he would return to her.

In Allie love had worked magic. It had freed her from a horrible black memory. Her state had been one of wretchedness; she had been alone; she had wanted to die to forget those awful yells and screams—the murder, the blood, the terror and her anguish; she had had nothing to want to live for; she had almost hated those two kind men who tried so hard to make her forget. Then suddenly, she never remembered when, she had seen Neale with different eyes. A few words, a touch, a gift and a pledge—and life had been transformed for Allie Lee. Like a flower blooming overnight, her heart had opened to love; and all the distemper in her blood and the blackness in her mind had been dispelled.

The relief from pain and dread had been so great that love had become a beautiful and all-absorbing passion. Freed then, and strangely happy, she took to the life around her as naturally as if she had been born there, and she grew like a wild-flower. Neale had returned to her that autumn to make perfect the realization of her dreams. When he had gone away, she could not but be happy. She owed it to him to be perfect in joy, faith, love, and duty; and her adversity had discovered to her a courage and a will. She lived for Neale.

Summer, autumn, winter passed, short days full of solitude, beauty, thought and anticipation, and always achievement, for she could not stay idle. When the first green brightened the cottonwoods and willows along the brook, she knew that before their leaves had attained their full growth Neale would be on his way to her. A strange and inexplicable sense of the heart told her that he was coming.

More than once that spring had she bent over the mossy rock to peer down at her face mirrored in the crystal spring. Neale had made her aware of her beauty, and proud of it, since it seemed to be such a strange treasure to him. She marveled at her value to Neale, and she accepted it as a fact, because he had told her she was precious. At a word of his it seemed all the forces of her nature were drawn upon to fulfill his wish.

ON the May morning that Slingerland left her alone, Allie was startled by a *clip-clop* of horses trotting up

the trail a few hours after his departure. Her first thought was that Neale and Larry had returned. All her being suddenly radiated with rapture. She flew to the door.

Four horsemen rode into the clearing, but Neale was not among them.

Allie's joy was short-lived. The reaction to disappointment seemed a violent, agonizing wrench. She lost all control of her muscles for a moment, and had to lean against the cabin to keep from falling.

By this time the foremost rider pulled in his horse near the door. He was a young giant with hulking shoulders—ruddy-faced, bold-eyed, ugly-mouthed. He reminded Allie of some one she had seen in California. He stared at her.

"Hullo! Aint you Durade's girl?" he asked in gruff astonishment.

Then Allie knew she had seen him out in the gold-fields.

"No, I'm not," she replied.

"Uhuh! You look oncommon like her. . . . . Anybody home around here?"

"Slingerland went over the hill," replied Allie. "He'll be back presently." The fellow brushed her aside and went into the cabin. Then the other three riders arrived.

"Mornin', Miss," said one, a grizzled veteran who might have been miner or trapper or bandit. The other two reined in behind him. One wore a wide-brimmed black sombrero from under which a dark, sinister face gleamed. The last had sandy hair and light, roving eyes.

"Whar's Fresno?" asked this last individual.

"I'm inside," replied the man called Fresno, and he appeared at the door. He stretched out a long arm and grasped Allie before she could avoid him. When she began to struggle, the huge hand closed on her wrist until she could have screamed in pain.

"Hold on, girl! It wont do you no good to jerk—an' if you holler, I'll choke you," he said. "Fellers, get inside the cabin an' rustle around lively."

WITH one pull he hauled Allie toward his horse, and taking a lasso off his saddle, he roped her arms to her sides and tied her to the nearest tree.

"Keep mum now, or it'll be the wuss fer you," he ordered; then he went into the cabin.

They were a bad lot. Slingerland's anxiety had at last been fully justified. Allie did not realize this until she found herself bound to the tree. Then she was furious, and she strained with all her might to slip free of the rope. But the efforts were useless; she only succeeded in bruising her arms for nothing. And when she desisted, she was ready to succumb to despair, until a flashing thought of Neale, of the agony that must be his if he lost her or if harm befell her, drew her up sharply, thrillingly. A girl's natural and instinctive fear was vanquished by her love. And love in that desperate strait became all which was humanly possible of courage and spirit.

She heard the robbers knocking things about in the cabin. They threw bales of beaver-pelts out of the door. Presently Fresno reappeared carrying a buckskin sack in which Slingerland kept his money and few valuables, and the others followed, quarreling over a cane-covered demijohn in which there had once been liquor.

"Nary a drop!" growled the one who got possession of it. And with rage he threw the thing back into the cabin, where it crashed into the fire.

"Sandy, you've scattered the fire," protested the grizzled robber, as he glanced into the cabin. "Them furs is catchin'."

"Let 'em burn!" called Fresno. "We got all we want. Come on."

"But what's the sense burnin' the feller's cabin down?"

"Nuthin'll burn," said the dark-faced man; "an' if it does, it'll look like Indians' work. Savvy, old Miles?"

They shuffled out together. Evidently Fresno was the leader, or at least the strongest force. He looked at the sack in his hand and then at Allie.

"You fellers fight over thet," he said, and throwing the sack on the ground, he strode toward Allie.

The three men all made a rush for the sack, and Sandy got it. The other two pressed round him, not threaten-

ingly, but aggressively, sure of their rights.

"I'll divide," said Sandy as he mounted his horse. "Wait till we make camp. You fellers pack the beavers."

Fresno untied Allie from the tree, but he left the lasso around her, and holding to it and her arm, he rudely dragged her to his horse.

"Git up, an' hurry," he ordered.

Allie mounted. The stirrups were too long.

"You fellers clear out," called Fresno, "an' ketch me one of them hosses we seen along the brook."

WHILE he readjusted the stirrups, Allie looked down upon him. He was an uncouth ruffian, and his touch gave her an insupportable disgust. He wore no weapons, but his saddle-holster contained a revolver, and the sheath a rifle. Allie could have shot him and made a run for it, and she had the nerve. The others, however, did not get out of sight before Fresno had the stirrups adjusted. He strode after them, leading the horse. Allie glanced back to see a thin stream of smoke coming out of the cabin door. Then she faced about, desperately resolved to take any chance to get away. She decided these men would not be safe for very long. Whatever she was to do, she must do that day, and she only awaited her chance.

At the ford, Sandy caught one of Slingerland's horses—a mustang and a favorite of Allie's, and one she could ride. He was as swift as the wind. Once upon him, she could run away from any horse these robbers rode. Fresno put the end of the lasso around the mustang's neck.

"Can you ride bareback?" he asked Allie.

Allie lied. Her first thought was to lead them astray as to her skill with a horse; then it occurred to her that if she rode Fresno's saddle, there might be an opportunity to use the gun.

Fresno leaped astride the mustang and was promptly bucked off. The other men guffawed. Fresno swore, and picking himself up, tried again. This time the mustang behaved better, but it plainly did not like the weight. Then Fresno started off, leading his own horse, and at a trot that showed he wanted to cover ground.

Allie heard the others behind quarreling over something, probably the gold Slingerland had been so many years in accumulating.

They rode on—to where the valley opened into another, along which wound the old St. Vrain and Laramie Trail. They kept to this, traveling east for a few miles, and then entered an intersecting valley, some distance up which they had a camp. They had not taken the precaution to hide either packs or mules, and so far as Allie could tell, they had no fear of Indians. Probably they had crossed from California, and being dishonest and avoiding caravans and camps, they had not become fully acquainted with the perils of that region.

THEY arrived at this place about noon. The sun was becoming blurred, and a storm appeared brewing. Fresno dismounted, dropping the halter of the mustang. Then he let go his own bridle. The eyes he bent on Allie made her turn hers away as from something that could scorch and stain. He pulled her off the saddle, rudely, with coarse and meaning violence.

Allie pushed him back and faced him. In a way she had been sheltered all her life; yet she had lived among such men as this man, and she knew that resistance or pleadings would be useless—would only inflame him. She was not ready yet to court death.

"Wait," she said.

"Uhuh!" he grunted, breathing heavily. He was an animal, slow-witted and brutal.

"Fresno, I am Durade's girl!" she went on.

"I thought I knowed you. But you're grown to be a woman an' a damn pretty one."

Allie drew him aside, farther from the others, who had renewed a loud altercation.

"Fresno, it's gold you want," she affirmed, rather than asked.

"Sure! But no small stake like thet'd be my choice—ag'in' you," he leered, jerking a thumb back at his companions.

"You remember Horn?" went on Allie.

"Horn! The miner who made thet big strike out near Sacramento?"

"Yes, that's who I mean," replied Allie hurriedly. "We—we left California in his caravan. He brought all his gold with him."

Fresno began to lean down in great interest.

"We were attacked by Sioux. . . . . Horn buried all that gold—on the spot where he—all—all the others were killed—except me. . . . . And I know where."

Allie shuddered with what the words brought up. But no memory could weaken her.

Fresno opened his large mouth to bawl this unexpected news to his comrades.

"Don't call them—don't tell them," Allie whispered. "There's only one condition—I'll take you where that gold's hidden."

"Girl, I can make you tell," he replied menacingly.

"No, you can't."

"You aint so smart you think I'll let you go—jest fer some gold?" he queried. "Gold'll be cheap along this trail soon. An' girls like you are scarce."

"No—that's not what I meant. . . . . Get rid of the others—and I'll take you where Horn buried his gold."

Fresno stared at her. He grinned. The idea evidently surprised and flattered him, and grew perplexing.

"But Frank, he's my pard—thet one with the black hat," he protested. "I couldn't do no dirt to Frank. . . . . What's your game, girl? I'll beat you into tellin' me where that gold is."

"Beating wont make me tell," replied Allie with intensity. "Nothing will, if I don't want to. . . . . My game is for my life. You know I've no chance among four men like you."

"Aw, I don't know about thet," he blustered. "I can take care of you. . . . . But say, if you'd stand fer Frank, mebbe I'll take you up. . . . . Girl, are you lyin' about thet gold?"

"No."

"Why didn't the trapper dig it up? You must hev told him."

"Because he was afraid to keep it in or near his cabin. We meant to leave it till we were ready to get out of the country."

That appeared plausible to Fresno, and he grew more thoughtful.

MEANWHILE the altercation among the other three ruffians assumed proportions that augured a fight.

"I'll divide this sack when I git good an' ready," declared Sandy.

"But pard, thet's no square deal," protested old Miles. "I'm a-gettin' mad. I seen you meant to keep it all."

The dark-faced ruffian shoved a grasping hand under Sandy's nose. "When do I git mine?" he demanded.

"I said when."

Fresno wheeled and called: "Frank, you come here."

The other approached sullenly.

"Fresno, thet Sandy is whole hog or none!" he exclaimed.

"Let 'em fight it out," replied Fresno. "We've got a bigger game. Besides, they'll shoot each other up. Then we'll hev it all. Come, give 'em elbow-room."

He led Allie and his horse away a little distance.

"Fetch them packs, Frank," he called.

The mustang followed, and presently Frank came with one of the packs. Fresno slipped the saddle from his horse, and laying it under a tree, he pulled revolver and rifle from their sheaths. The revolver he stuck in his belt; the rifle he leaned against a branch.

"Sandy'll plug old Miles in jest another minute," remarked Fresno.

"What's this other game?" queried Frank curiously.

"It's gold, Frank—gold," replied Fresno, and in few words he told his comrade about Horn's buried gold. But he did not mention the condition under which the girl would reveal its hiding-place. Evidently he had no doubt that he could force her to tell.

"Let's rustle," cried Frank, his dark face gleaming. "We want to git out of this country quick."

"You bet!" An' I wonder when we'll be fetchin' up with them railroad camps we heerd about—camps full of gold an' whisky an' women!"

"We've enough on our hands now," replied Frank. "Let's rustle fer thet—"

A gunshot interrupted him. Then a hoarse curse rang out—and then two more shots from a different gun.

"Them last was Sandy's," observed Fresno coolly. "An' of course they landed. . . . . Go see if old Miles hit Sandy."

Frank strode off under the trees.

ALLIE had steeled herself to anything, and those shots warned her that perhaps she had two less to contend with and that she must be quick to seize the first opportunity to act. She could leap upon the mustang, and if she was lucky could get away. She could jump for the rifle and surely shoot one of these villains, perhaps both of them. But the spirit that gave her the nerve to attempt either plan bade her wait, not too long, but longer, in the hope of a more favorable moment.

Frank returned to Fresno, and he carried the sack of gold that had caused dissension. Fresno laughed.

"Sandy's plugged hard—low down," said Frank. "He can't live. An' old Miles is croaked."

"Uhuh! Frank, I'll go git the other packs. An' you see what's in this sack," said Fresno.

When he got out of sight, Allie slipped the lasso from her waist.

"I don't need that hanging to me," she said.

"Sure you don't, sweetheart," replied the ruffian Frank. "Thet man Fresno is rough with ladies. Now, I'm gentle. . . . . Come an' let me spill this sack in your lap."

"I guess not," replied Allie.

"Wal, you're sure a cat. Look at her eyes! . . . . All right, don't git mad at me."

He spilled the contents of the sack out on the sand and bent over it.

What had made Allie's eyes flash was the recognition of her opportunity. She did not hesitate an instant. First she looked to see just where the mustang stood. He was near, with the rope dragging, half coiled. Allie suddenly was struck with the head and ears of the mustang. He heard something. She looked up the valley slope and saw a file of Indians riding down. Some were silhouetted against the sky. They were coming fast. For an instant Allie's senses reeled. Then she rallied. Her situation was desperate—almost hopeless. But here was the issue of life or death, and she met it.

In one bound she had the rifle. Long before, she had ascertained that it was loaded. The man Frank heard the click of the rising hammer.

"What're you doin'?" he demanded fiercely.

"Don't get up!" warned Allie. She stepped backward nearer the mustang. "Look up the slope—Indians!"

But he paid no heed. He jumped up and strode toward her.

"Look, man!" cried Allie piercingly. He came on.

Then Fresno appeared, running, white of face.

Allie, without leveling the rifle, fired at the furious fool even as his clutching hands struck the weapon.

HE halted with a sudden gasp, sank to his knees, fell against the tree and then staggered up.

Allie had to drop the rifle to hold the frightened mustang. She got on him, urged him away and hauled in the dragging lasso. Once out of brush and stones, he began to run. Allie saw a clear field ahead, but steep, rocky slopes boxing the valley. She would be hemmed in there. She got the mustang turned, and ran among the trees, keeping far over to the left. She heard beating hoofs off to the right, crashings in brush and then yells. An opening showed the slope alive with Indians riding down hard. Some were heading down the valley to cut off escape—others up; and the majority were coming straight for the clumps of trees.

Fresno burst out of cover mounted on Sandy's bay horse. He began to shoot, and the Indians fired in reply. All along the slopes rose white puffs of smoke, bullets clipped dust from the ground in front of Allie. Fresno drew ahead; the bay horse was swift. Allie pulled her mustang more to the left, hoping to get over the ridge, which on that side was not high. To her dismay Indians appeared there too. She

wheeled back to the first course and saw that she must try what Fresno was trying.

Then the robber Frank appeared riding out of the cedars. The Indian riders closed rapidly in on him, shooting all the time. His horse was hit, and stumbling, almost threw the rider. Then it ran wildly—could not be controlled. One Indian was speeding from among the others. He had a bow bent almost double, and suddenly it straightened. Allie saw dust fly from Frank's back. He threw up his arms and slid off under the horse, the saddle slipping with him. The horse, wounded and terrorized, began to plunge, dragging man and saddle.

In that direction Allie looked no more.

AHEAD, far to the right, Fresno was gaining on his pursuers. He was out of range now, but the Indians kept shooting. Then Allie's situation became so perilous that she saw only the Indians to the left, with mustangs stretched out to intercept her before she got out into the wider valley.

Her mustang did not need to be goaded. The yells behind and on both sides, and the whistling bullets, drove it to the utmost. Allie had all she could do to ride it. She was nearly blinded by the stinging wind, yet she saw those lithe, half-naked savages dropping gradually back and knew she was gaining. Her hair became loose and streamed in the wind. She heard the yells then. No more rifles cracked. Her pursuers discovered that she was a girl, and were bent on capture.

Fleet and strong the mustang ran, sure-footed, leaping the gullies, and it outdistanced the pursuers on the left. Allie thought she could turn into the big valley and go down the main trail before the Indians chasing Fresno discovered her. But it was a vain hope! Across the width of the valley, where it opened out, a string of Indians stretched, riding back to meet her.

A long dust-line, dotted with bobbing objects, to the right! Behind, a close-packed bunch of hard riders! In front an opening trap of yelling savages! She was lost. And suddenly she remembered the fate of her mother. Her spirit sank; her strength fled. All blurred around her. She lost control of the mustang. She felt it turning, slowing. The yells burst hideously in her ears. Like her mother's—her fate! A roar of speedy hoof-beats seemed to envelop her, and her nostrils were filled with dust. They were upon her. She prayed for a swift stroke—then for her soul. All darkened; her senses were failing. Neale's face glimmered there in space—was lost. She was slipping—slipping. A rude and powerful hold fastened upon her. Then all faded.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN Allie Lee came back from that black gap in her consciousness, she was lying in a circular tent of poles and hides.

For a second she was dazed. But the Indian designs and trappings in the tent brought swift realization: she had been brought a captive to the Sioux encampment. She raised her head. She was lying on a buffalo robe; her hands and feet were bound; there was no one else in the tent; the floor was littered with blankets and beaded buckskin garments. Through a narrow opening she saw that the day was far spent. Indians and horses passed to and fro; there was a bustle outside and a jabber of Indian jargon; the wind blew hard, and drops of rain pattered on the tent.

Allie could scarcely credit the evidence of her own senses. Here she was, alive! Her arms and body appeared bruised, and they ached, but she was not in any great pain. Her hopes arose. If the Sioux meant to kill her, they would have done it at once. They might intend to reserve her for torture, but more likely it was to make her a captive in the tribe. In that case Slingerland would find her and get her freedom.

Rain began to fall more steadily. Allie smelled smoke and saw the reflection of fires on the wall of the tent. Presently a squaw entered. She was a huge woman, evidently old, very dark of face and wrinkled. She carried a

bowl and platter which she set down; and grunting, she began to untie Allie's hands. Then she gave the girl a not ungentle shake. Allie sat up.

"Do you—do they mean—to kill me?" she asked.

The squaw shook her head to indicate she did not understand, and she spoke in Indian language. Her gestures toward the things she had brought were easy to interpret. Allie partook of the Indian food, which was coarse and unpalatable, but satisfied hunger. When she had finished, the squaw laboriously tied the thongs about Allie's wrists, and pushing her back on the robe, covered and left her there.

After that it grew dark rapidly, and the rain increased to a torrent. Allie, hardly realizing how cold she had been, began to warm up under the woolly robe. The roar of the rain drowned all other sounds outside. She wondered if Slingerland had returned to his cabin, and if so, what he had done. She felt sorry for him. He would take the loss hard. But he would trail her.

And Allie thought also of Neale. She would live; she would pray and fight off harm; she would find him if he could not find her; she was his utterly. And lying there bound and helpless in an Indian camp, captive of the relentless Sioux, for all she knew in peril of death, with the roar of wind and rain around her and the darkness like pitch, she yet felt her pulses throb and thrill, felt her spirit soar at remembrance of the man she loved. In the end she would find Neale; and it was with his name trembling on her lips that she fell asleep.

MORE than once during the night Allie awoke in the darkness to hear the wind blow and the rain roar. The dawn broke cold and gray, and the storm gradually diminished. Allie lay alone for hours, beginning to suffer by reason of her bonds and cramped limbs. But the longer she was left alone, the more hopeful her case seemed.

In the afternoon she was visited by the squaw, released and fed as before. Allie made signs that she wanted to have her feet free, to get up and move. The squaw complied with her wishes. Allie could scarcely stand; she felt dizzy; a burning, aching sensation filled her limbs.

Presently the old woman led her out. Allie saw a great number of tents, many horses and squaws and children, but few braves. The encampment lay in a wide valley, similar to all the valleys of that country, except that it was larger. A stream in flood swept yellow and noisy along the edge of the encampment. The children ran at sight of Allie, and the women stared. It was easy to see they disapproved of her. The few braves looked at her with dark, steady, unfathomable eyes. The camp appeared rich in color—in horses and trappings; evidently this tribe was not poor. Allie saw utensils, blankets, clothing—many things never made by Indians.

She was led to a big lodge with tent adjoining. Inside, an old Indian brave, grizzled and shrunken, smoked before a fire; and as Allie was pushed on into the tent, a young Indian squaw appeared. She was small, with a handsome, scornful face and dark, proud eyes, and she was gorgeously clad in elaborate beaded and fringed and ornate buckskin—evidently an Indian princess or a chief's wife. She threw Allie a venomous glance as she went out. Allie heard the old squaw's grunting voice and the young one's quick and passionate answers.

There was nothing for Allie to do but await developments. She rested, rubbing her sore wrists and ankles, thankful she had been left unbound. She saw that she was watched, particularly by the young woman, who often walked to the opening to glance in. The interior of this tent presented a contrast to the other in which she had been confined. It was dry and clean, with a floor of rugs and blankets; and all around hung beaded and painted and feathered articles, some for wear and some for what purposes she could not guess.

THE afternoon passed without further incident until the old squaw entered, manifestly to feed Allie and tie her up as heretofore. The younger

squaw came in to watch the trying process.

Allie spoke to her—held out her bound hands appealingly. This elicited no further response than an intent look.

Night came. Allie lay awake a good while, and then she fell asleep. Next morning she was awakened by an uproar. Whistling and trampling mustangs, whoops of braves, the babble of many voices, barking of dogs, movement, bustle, sounds all about attested to the return of the warriors. Allie's heart sank for a moment; this would be the time of trial for her. But the clamor subsided without any disturbance near her tent. By and by the old squaw returned to attend to her needs. This time on the way out she dropped a blanket-curtain between the tent and the lodge.

Soon Indians entered the lodge, quite a number, with squaws among them, judging by their voices; and a harangue lasting an hour or more interested Allie, especially because at times she heard and recognized the quick, passionate utterance of the young squaw.

Soon Allie's old attendant shuffled in, lifting the curtain and motioning Allie to come out. Allie went into the lodge. An early sun, shining into the wide door, lighted the place brightly. It was full of Indians. In the center stood a striking figure, probably a chief, tall and lean, with scars on his naked breast. His face was bronze, with deep lines showing somberness and bitterness, with cruel, thin lips and with eyes that glittered like black fire. His head had the poise of an eagle's.

His piercing glance scarcely rested an instant upon Allie. He motioned for her to be taken away. Allie, as she was led back, got a glimpse of the young squaw. Sullen, with bowed head and dark, rich blood thick in her face, with heaving breast and clenched hands, she seemed a picture of outraged pride and jealousy.

Allie gathered that she was probably to be the captive of the chief, and that the young bride fiercely resented it.

THAT night Allie was awakened by a gentle shake. A hand moved from her shoulder to her lips. A pale moonlight filtered into the tent. Allie saw a figure kneeling beside her, and she heard a "Sh-s-s-sh!" Then her hands and feet were freed. She divined then that the young squaw had come to let her go in the dead of night. Her heart throbbed high as her liberator held up a side of the tent. Allie crawled out. A bright moon soared in the sky. The camp was silent. The young woman slipped after her, and with a warning gesture to be silent, she led Allie away toward the slope of the valley. It was a goodly distance.

Not a sound disturbed the peace of the beautiful night. The air was cold and still. Allie shivered and trembled. This was the most exciting adventure of all. She felt a softness and warmth for this Indian girl. Once the squaw halted, with ear turned, listening. Allie's heart stopped beating. But no bark of dog, no sound of pursuit, justified alarm. At last they reached the base of the slope.

The Indian pointed high toward the ridge-top. Then she made undulating motions of her hand as if to picture the topography of the ridges and the valleys between; and then kneeling, she made a motion with her finger on the ground that indicated a winding trail. And then she stealthily glided away.

Allie was left alone, free, with direction how to find the trail. She now began to climb. The slope was grassy, and her light feet left little trace. She climbed and climbed until she thought her heart would burst. Once upon the summit, she fell in the grass and rested.

A WOLF mourned; and the sound, clear and sharp, startled her. But remembering Slingerland's word that no beast would be likely to harm her in the warm season, she was reassured. Soon she had crossed the narrow back of the ridge, to see below another valley like the one she had left, but without the tents and fires. Descent was easy, and she covered ground swiftly. She feared to come to a stream in flood. Again she mounted a slope, zigzagging up, going slowly, reserving her strength, pausing often to rest and to listen.

In this manner she climbed four

ridges and crossed three valleys before a rest became imperative. Besides, dawn was near, as evidenced by the paling stars and the gray in the east. It would be well for her to remain on high ground while day broke.

So she rested; but soon, cooling off, she suffered with the cold. Huddling down in the grass against a stone, facing the east, she waited for dawn to break.

The stars shut their eyes; the dark blue of sky turned gray; a pale light seemed to suffuse itself throughout the east. The valley lay asleep in shadow; the ridges awoke in soft gray mist. Far down over the vastness and openness of the plains appeared a ruddy glow. It warmed, it changed, it brightened. A sea of cloudy vapors, serene and motionless, changed to rose and pink, and a red curve slid up over the distant horizon. All that world of plain and cloud and valley and ridge quickened as with the soul of day while it colored with the fire of sun. Red, radiant, glorious, the sun rose.

It was the dispeller of gloom, the bringer of hope. Allie Lee, lost on the heights, held out her arms to the east and the sun, and she cried: "Oh God! . . . . Oh! Neale—Neale!"

WHEN Allie turned to look down into the valley below, she saw the white, winding, ribbonlike trail, and with her eyes she followed it to where the valley opened wide upon the plains.

She must go down the slope to the cover of the trees and brush and there work along eastward, ever with eye alert. She must meet with travelers within a few days or perish of starvation or again fall into the hands of the Sioux. Thirst she did not fear, for the recent heavy rain had left water-holes everywhere.

With action her spirit arose, and the numbness of hands and feet left her. Time passed swiftly. The sun stood straight overhead before she realized she had walked miles; and it declined westward as she skulked like an Indian from tree to tree, from bush to bush, along the first bench of the valley floor.

Night overtook her at the gateway of the valley. The vast monotony of the plains opened before her like a gulf. She feared it. She found a mound of earth with a wind-worn shelf in its side, and overgrown with sage; into this she crawled, and curling up in the sand, she prayed and slept.

Next day she took up a position a few hundred yards from the trail and followed its course, straining her eyes to see before and behind her, husbanding her strength with frequent rests, and drinking from every pond.

That day, too, like its predecessor, passed swiftly by and left her out upon the huge, billowy bosom of the plains. Again she sought a hiding-place, but none offered. There was no warmth in the sand, and the night-wind arose cold, moaning. She could not sleep. The whole empty world seemed haunted. Rustlings of the sage, seepings of the sand, gusts of the wind, and the night and the loneliness and the faithless stars and a treacherous moon that sank, and the wailing of wolves—all worked upon her mind and spirit until she lost her courage. She feared to shut her eyes or cover her face, for then she could not see the stealthy forms stalking her out of the gloom.

"O God, have You forsaken me!" she moaned.

The answer was there in the great silence, so much more striking because of the vain and puny little ghosts of sounds in the vast, lonely, empty hall of the night, so terrible now in its reality.

How relentless the grip of the endless hours! The black night held. And yet when she had grown nearly mad waiting for the dawn, it broke, ruddy and bright, with the sun as always a promise.

ALLIE found no water that day. She suffered from the lack of it, but hunger appeared to have fled. Her strength diminished, and yet she walked and plodded miles on miles, always gazing hopelessly and hopefully along the winding trail.

At the close of the short and merciful day, despair seized upon part of Allie's mind. With night came gloom—the old somber spirit—memory of her

mother's fate. It impinged upon that later spirit and at intervals thrust aside the face of the man that had almost become to her the face of God. She clung to a strange faith. But all reason, all fact, all reality, all present pointed to her doom—starvation—death by thirst—or Indians! A thousand times she imagined she heard the hoof-beats of many fleet mustangs. Only the tiny pats of the broken sage-leaves in the wind!

It was a dark and cloudy night, warmer and threatening rain. She kept continually turning around and around to see what it was, creeping up behind her so stealthily. How horrible was the dark—the blackness that showed invisible things! A wolf sent up its hungry, lonely cry. She did not fear this reality as she feared the intangible. If she lived through this night, then another like it would return the horror. She would rather not live. Like a creature beset by foes all around, she watched—she faced every little sound; she peered into the darkness, shaking and cold, instinctively unable wholly to give up, to end the struggle, to lie down and die.

Neale was with her. He was alive. He was thinking of her at that moment. He would expect her to overcome self and accident and calamity. He spoke to her out of the distance, and his voice had the old power, stronger than fear, exhaustion, hopelessness, insanity. He could call her back from the grave.

So the night passed. And in the morning, when the sun lighted the level land, far down the trail westward gleamed a long white line of moving wagons.

ALLIE uttered a wild and broken cry in which all the torture shuddered out of her heart. Again she was saved! That black doubt was shame to her spirit. She prayed her thanksgiving and vowed in her prayers that no adversity, however cruel, could ever again shake her faith or conquer her spirit.

She was going on to meet Neale. Life was suddenly sweet again, unutterably full, blazing like the sunrise. He was there—somewhere to the eastward.

She waited. The caravan was miles away. But it was no mirage, no trick of the wide plain!

At last she saw the scouts riding in front and alongside, and the plodding oxen. It was a large caravan, well equipped for defense.

She left the little rise of ground and made for the trail. How uneven the walking! She staggered; her legs were weak. But she gained the trail and stood there. She waved. They were not so far away. Surely she would be seen. She staggered on—waved again.

There! The leading scout had halted. He pointed. Other riders crowded around him. The caravan halted.

Allie heard voices. She waved her arms and tried to run. A scout dismounted—advanced to meet her, rifle ready. The caravan feared a Sioux trick. Allie descried a lean, gray old man—now striding rapidly.

"It's a white gal!" she heard him shout.

OTHERS ran forward—then came on as she staggered to meet them.

"I'm alone. I'm—lost!" she faltered.

"A white gal in Injun dress," said another.

And then kind hands were outstretched to her.

"I'm—running—away. . . . . Indians!" panted Allie.

"Whar?" asked the lean old scout.

"Over the ridges—miles—twenty miles—more. They had me. I got away. . . . . Four—three days ago."

The group around Allie opened to admit another man.

"What's this? Who's this?" called a quick voice, soft and liquid and yet with a quality of steel in it.

Allie had heard that voice. She saw a tall man in long black coat and wide black hat and flowered vest and flowing tie. Her heart contracted.

"Allie!" rang the voice.

She looked up to see a dark, handsome face—a Spanish face with almond eyes, sloe-black and magnetic—a face that suddenly blazed. She recognized the man with whom her mother had run away—whom she had long believed her father—the adventurer Durade! Then she fainted.

CHAPTER XIII

ALLIE recovered to find herself lying in a canvas-covered wagon and being worked over by several sympathetic women. She did not see Durade, but she knew she had not been mistaken. The wagon was rolling along as fast as oxen could travel. Evidently the caravan had been alarmed by the proximity of Sioux and was making as much progress as possible.

Allie did not answer many questions. She drank thirstily, but was too exhausted to eat.

"Whose caravan?" was the only query she made.

"Durade's," replied one woman, and it was evident from the way she spoke that he was a man of consequence.

As Allie lay there, slowly succumbing to weariness and drowsiness, she thought of the irony of fate that had let her escape the Sioux only to fall into the hands of Durade. Still, there was hope. Durade was traveling toward the East. Out there somewhere he would meet Neale, and then blood would be spilled. She had always regarded Durade strangely, wondering that in spite of his kindness to her she could not really care for him. She understood now, and hated him passionately. And if there was anyone she feared, Durade was he.

Allie lost herself in the past, seeing the stream of mixed humanity that passed through Durade's gambling-halls. No doubt he was on his way now to search for her mother—and to profit by the building of the railroad. But he would never find her mother. Allie was glad.

At length Allie fell asleep and slept long; then she dozed at intervals. The caravan halted. She heard the familiar singsong calls to the oxen. Soon all was bustle about her, and this fully awakened her. In a moment or more she must expect to be face to face with Durade. What should she tell him? How much should she let him know? Not one word about her mother! He would be less afraid of her if he found out that the mother was dead. Durade had always feared Allie's mother.

The women with whom Allie had ridden helped her out of the wagon, and finding her too weak to stand, they made a bed for her on the ground. The camp-site appeared to be just the same as any other part of that monotonous plain-land. Evidently there was a stream or water-hole near by. Allie saw her companions were the only women in the caravan, and were plain persons, blunt yet kind, used to hard, honest work, and probably wives of defenders of the wagon-train.

Presently Allie saw Durade approaching. How well she remembered him! Yet the lapse of time and the change between the childhood when she had been with him and the present, seemed incalculable. He spoke to the women, motioning in her direction. His bearing and action were those of a man of education and a gentleman. Yet he looked what her mother had called him—a broken man of class, an adventurer, victim to some passion.

He came and knelt by Allie.

"How are you now?" he asked. His voice was gentle and courteous, different from that of other men. It was as if he had learned to speak that way before he had come among rough Western men.

"I can't stand up," replied Allie.

"Are you hurt?"

"No—only worn out."

"You escaped from Indians?"

"Yes—a tribe of Sioux. They intended to keep me captive, but a young squaw freed me—led me off."

He paused as if it was an effort to speak, and a long, thin, shapely hand went to his throat.

"Your mother?" he asked hoarsely.

Allie gazed straight into his eyes with wonder, pain, suspicion.

"My mother! I've not seen her for nearly two years."

"My God! What happened? You lost her? You became separated? Indians—bandits? . . . . . Tell me!"

"I have no more to tell," said Allie. His pain revived her own. She pitied Durade. He had changed—aged; there were lines new to her.

"I spent a year in and around Ogden—searching," went on Durade. "Tell me more."

"No!" cried Allie.

"Do you know, then?" he asked, very low.

"I'm not your daughter—and Mother ran off from you. Yes, I know that," replied Allie bitterly.

"But I brought you up—took care of you—helped educate you," protested Durade with agitation. "You were my own child, I thought. I was always kind to you. I—I loved the mother in the daughter."

"Yes, I know. . . . . But you were wicked."

"If you wont tell me, it must mean she's still alive," he replied swiftly. "She's not dead. I'll find her. I'll make her come to me—or kill her. . . . . After all these years—to leave me!"

He seemed wrestling with mingled emotions. The man was proud and strong, but defeat in life, in the crowning passion of life, showed in his white face. The evil in him was not manifest.

"Where have you lived all this time?" he asked presently.

"Back in the hills with a trapper."

"You have grown. When I saw you, I thought it was the ghost of your mother. You are just as she was—when we met."

He seemed lost in sad retrospection. Allie saw streaks of gray in his once jet-black hair.

"What will you do?" asked Allie.

He was startled. The softness left him. A blaze seemed to leap under skin and eyes, and suddenly he was different—he was Durade, the gambler with gold and with life.

"Your mother left me for *you,*" he said with terrible bitterness. "And the game has played you into my hands. I'll keep you. I'll hold you to get even with her."

Allie felt stir in her the fear she had of him in her childhood when she disobeyed.

"But you can't keep me against my will—not any more—among people we'll meet eastward."

"I can, and I will!" he declared softly but implacably. "We're not going to the East. We'll be in rougher camps than gold-camps in California. There's no law but gold and guns out here. . . . . But if you speak of me to anyone, if you try to get away—may your God have mercy on you!"

The blaze of him then was the Spaniard. He meant more than dishonor, torture and death. The evil in him was rampant.

Allie knew him. He was the first who had ever dominated her through sheer force of will. Unless she abided by his command, her fate would be worse than if she had stayed captive among the Sioux. This man was not American. His years among men of later mold had not changed the Old World cruelty of his nature. She recognized the fact in utter despair. She had not strength left to keep her eyes open.

AFTER a while Allie grew conscious that Durade had left her. She felt like a creature that had been fascinated by a deadly snake, and left, only to await its return. Shudderingly, mournfully, she resigned herself to the feeling that she must stay under Durade's control until a dominance stronger than his released her. Neale seemed suddenly to have retreated far into the past, in her consciousness. A call of his voice, a sight of his face, would make that spirit of hers—his spirit—leap like a tigress in her defense. But where was Neale? The habits of life were all-powerful; and all her habits had been formed under Durade's magnetic eye. Neale retreated, and so did spirit, courage, hope. Love remained, despairing yet unquenchable.

Allie's resignation established a return to normal feelings. She ate and grew stronger; she slept and was refreshed.

The caravan moved on, twenty-five miles a day. At the next camp Allie tried walking again, to find her feet were bruised, her legs cramped and action awkward and painful. But she persevered, and the tingling of revived circulation was like needles pricking her flesh. She limped from one campfire to another; and all the rough men had a kind word or question or glance for her. Allie did not believe they were all honest men. Durade had employed a large force. Miners, hunters, scouts

and men of no hallmark except that of wildness composed the mixed caravan. It spoke much for Durade that they were under control. Allie well remembered hearing her mother say that he had a genius for drawing men to him and managing them.

Once, during her walk, when everyone appeared busy, a big fellow with hulking shoulders and bandaged head stepped beside her.

"Girl," he whispered, "if you want a knife slipped into Durade, tell him about me!"

SHE recognized the whisper before she did the heated red face with its crooked nose and bold eyes and ugly mouth. Fresno! He had escaped from the Sioux and had fallen in with Durade.

Allie shrunk from him. Durade, compared to this kind of ruffian, was a haven of refuge. She passed on without a sign. But Fresno was safe from her. This meeting made her aware of an impulse to run back to Durade, instinctively, as she had when a child. He had ruined her mother; he had meant to make a lure of her, the daughter; he had showed what his vengeance would be to that mother, as he had showed Allie her doom should she betray him. But notwithstanding all this, Durade was not Fresno, nor like any of those men whose eyes seemed to burn her.

She returned to the wagon, and to the several women and men attached to it, with the assurance that there were at least some good persons with the caravan. The women, naturally curious and sympathetic, questioned her in one way and another, about who she was, what had happened to her, where her people or friends were, how she had ever escaped robbers and Indians in that awful country; and they asked if she was really Durade's daughter. But Allie did not tell much about herself; and finally she was left in peace.

The lean old scout who had first seen Allie as she staggered into the trail told her it was over a hundred miles to the first camp of the railroad builders.

"Downhill all the way," he concluded. "An' we'll make it in a jiffy."

Nevertheless it took nearly all of four days to sight the camp of the graders—the advance guard of the great construction work. In those four days Allie had recovered her bloom, her health, her strength, all except the wonderful assurance which had been hers. Durade had spoken daily with her, and had been kind, watchful, like a guardian.

It was with a curious thrill that Allie gazed out as she rode into the construction camp. Horses and men and implements, all following the line of Neale's work! Could Neale be there? If so, how dead was her heart to his nearness?

SOILED and ragged tents were everywhere about; some of them belched smoke and from them resounded the ring of hammer on anvil. Soldiers stood on guard; red-shirted and blue-shirted men swarmed as thick as ants. In a wide hollow a long line of horses in double row, heads together, pulled hay from a rack as long as the line, and they pulled and snorted and bit at each other. A strong smell of hay and burning wood mingled with the odor of hot coffee and steaming beans; fires blazed on all sides; under one huge tent, or many tents without walls, stretched wooden tables and benches. On the rocks and sagebrush, and everywhere upon the tents, lay in a myriad of colors and varieties the late-washed clothes of the toilers; and through the wide street of the camp clattered teams and swearing teamsters, dragging plows with clanking chains and huge scoops turned upside down. Bordering the camp, running east as far as eye could see, stretched a high, flat yellow lane, with the earth hollowed away from it, so that it stood higher than the level plain; this was the work of the graders, the roadbed of the U. P. R.

This camp appeared to be Durade's destination. His caravan rode through and halted on the outskirts of the far side. Preparations began for what Allie concluded was to be a permanent halt. And here there was at once a significant disintegration of Durade's party. One by one the scouts received payment from their employer and with

horse and pack disappeared toward the camp. The lean old fellow who had taken kindly interest in Allie looked at the opening of the canvas over her wagon and wishing her luck, bade her good-by. The women likewise said good-by, informing her that they were going on home. Not one man among those left would Allie have trusted.

During the hurried settling of camp Durade came to Allie:

"Allie, you don't have to keep cooped up in there unless I tell you," he said. "But don't talk to anyone—and don't go that way."

He pointed toward the humming camp. "That place beats any gold-diggings I ever saw," he concluded.

The tall, scant sage afforded Allie some little seclusion, and she walked there until Durade called her to supper. She ate alone on a wagon-seat, and when twilight fell, she climbed into her wagon, grateful that it was high off the ground and inclosed her from all except sound. Darkness came; the fire died down; the low voices of Durade and his men, and of callers who visited them, flowed continuously.

Presently there arose a strange murmur, unlike any sound Allie had ever heard. It swelled into a low, distant roar. She was curious about it. Peeping out of her wagon-cover, she saw where the darkness flared to yellow with a line of lights—torches or lanterns or fires. Crossing and recrossing these lights, were black objects in twos and threes and dozens. And from this direction floated the strange low roar. Suddenly she realized. It was the life of the camp. Hundreds and thousands of men were there together—and as the night advanced, the low roar rose and fell, lulled away to come again—strange, sad, hideous, mirthful. For a long time Allie could not sleep.

NEXT morning Durade called her. When she unlaced the canvas flaps, it was to see the sun high and to hear the bustle of work all about her.

Durade brought her breakfast and gave her instructions. While he was about in the daytime, she might come out and do what she could to amuse herself, but when he was absent, or at night, she must be in her wagon-tent, laced in, and was not to answer any call. She would be guarded by Stitt, one of his men, a deaf-mute faithful to his interests, who had orders to handle her roughly should she disobey. Allie would not have been inclined to disobey, even without the fear and abhorrence she felt of this ugly and deformed mute.

That day Durade caused to be erected tents, canopies, tables, benches and lastly a larger tent into which the tables and benches were carried. Fresno worked hard, as did all the men except Stitt, who had nothing to do but watch Allie's wagon.

Wearily the day passed for her. How many days must she spend thus, watching idly, because there was nothing else to do? Still, back in her consciousness, there was a vague and growing thought. Sooner or later Neale would appear in the flesh as he appeared in her dreams!

That night Allie, peeping out, saw by the fire- and torchlight men drawn to Durade's large tent. Mexicans, negroes, Irishmen—all kinds of men passed, loud and profane, careless and reckless, quarrelsome and loquacious. Soon there arose in her ears the long-forgotten but now familiar sounds of a gambling-hell in full blast. The rolling rattle of the wheel, sharp between the lulls of many voices, strident and keen, intermingled with the strange, rich, false clink of gold.

It needed only a few days and nights for Allie Lee to divine Durade's retrogression. He had been a gambler for the sake of gambling; now in addition he was possessed of an unscrupulous intent, a strange, cold, devouring passion to get gold that he might gamble with it.

HARDLY a week elapsed before his gambling-tent roared all night. Allie got most of her sleep during the day. She shut out what sound she could and tried to be deaf to the rest. But she had to hear the angry bawls, pistol-shots and shrill cries, and the trample of heavy boots as men dragged a dead gamester out.

Day was a relief, a blessing. Allie

was frequently cooped up in her narrow canvas-covered wagon, but she saw from there the life of the grading camp. There were various bosses—boarding-boss, who fed the laborers; stable-boss, who had charge of the teams; grading-boss, who ruled the diggers and scrapers; and the timekeeper-boss, who kept track of the work of all.

In the early morning a horde of hungry men stampeded the boarding-tents, where the cooks and waiters made mad haste to satisfy loud and merry demands. At sunset the same horde dropped in, dirty and hot and lame, and fought for seats while others waited.

Out on the level plain were the hundreds of teams, moving on and returning, the drivers shouting, the horses bending. The hot sun glared; the wind whipped up the dust; the laborers spurred to the shout of the boss—and on westward crept the low, level yellow bank of sand and gravel—the roadbed of the U. P. R.

Thus the daytime had its turmoil too, but splendid, like the toil of heroes united to gain some common end. And the army of soldiers was there, ever keen-eyed for the skulking Sioux.

Mull, the boss of the graders, became a friend of Durade's. The wily Spaniard could draw any class of men. This Mull had been a driver of truck-horses in New York, and now he was a driver of men. He was huge, like a bull, heavy-lipped and red-cheeked, hairy and coarse, with big, sunken eyes. A brute, a cave-man! He drank; he gambled. He was at once a bully and a pirate. Responsible to no one but his contractor, he hated the contractor and hated his job. He was great in his place, brutal with fist and foot, a gleaner of results from hard men at a hard time. He won gold from Durade, or as Fresno guffawed to a comrade, he had been allowed to win it. Durade picked his man. He had big schemes, and he needed Mull.

Benton was Durade's objective point—Benton, the great and growing camp-city, where gold and blood were spilled in the dusty streets and life roared like a blast from hell. All that Allie heard of this Benton increased her dread, and at last she determined that she would run any risk rather than be taken there. That night, as soon as it grew dark, she slipped out of the wagon and under cover of the darkness made her escape.

CHAPTER XIV

THE building of the Union Pacific, as it advanced westward, caused many camps and towns to spring up and flourish like mushrooms in a single night. Trains were run as far as the rails were laid; and towns and communities were born, for the like of which, in strangeness, there was no analogy.

Warren Neale did not get away from the fascination of the work and life, even though, instead of being important and strenuous, he was now insignificant and idle. He began to drink and gamble in North Platte, more in a bitter defiance than from any real desire; then with Larry King he drifted to Kearney.

There Larry answered to the violence growing more unrestrained in him. In a quarrel with a construction boss named Smith, Larry accused Smith of being the crooked tool of the crooked commissioners who had forced Neale to quit his job. Smith grew hot and profane. The cowboy promptly slapped his face. Then Smith, like the fool he was, went after his gun. He never got it out.

It distressed Neale greatly that Larry had badly shot up a man—and a railroad man. No matter what Larry said, Neale knew the shooting was on his account. This deed made the cowboy a marked man. It changed him, also, toward Neale, for he saw that Neale's wildness was injuring his chances of returning to work. Larry never ceased importuning Neale to go back to his job. After shooting Smith, the cowboy made one more eloquent appeal to Neale; then he left for Cheyenne. Neale followed him.

Cheyenne was just emancipating itself from the end of a reign as a headquarters town, and though depleted and thin, it had made a bid for permanency. But the sting and wildness of life had

gone on with the rails and the operations to the next and most famous town—Benton. Larry also had gone on. Neale boarded a train for Benton and watched with bitterness the familiar landmarks he had learned to know so well while surveying the line and now saw again under hateful circumstances. He was no longer connected with the great project—no more a necessary part of the great movement.

Beyond Medicine Bow the grass and the green failed, and the immense train of freight-cars and passenger coaches, loaded to capacity, clattered on into arid country. Gray and red, the drab and fiery colors of the desert lent the ridges character, forbidding and barren.

From a car-window Neale got his first glimpse of the wonderful terminus city, and for once his old thrills returned. He recalled the distance: seven hundred—no, six hundred and ninety-eight—miles from Omaha; so far westward was Benton.

It lay in the heart of barrenness, alkali, desolation, on the face of the wind-swept desert, with dust-devils sweeping along, yellow and funnel-shaped—a huge blocked-out town set where no town could ever live. Benton was prey for sun, wind, dust and drouth—and the wind was terrible and insupportably cold. No sage, no cedars, no grass, not even a cactus-bush, nothing green or living, relieved the eye, which swept across the gray and the white, through the dust, to the distant, bare and desolate hills of drab.

THE immense train clattered and jolted to a stop. A roar of wind, a cloud of powdery dust, a discordant and unceasing din of voices, came through the open windows of the car.

Neale, carrying his bag, stepped off into half a foot of dust. He saw a crowd, of travelers that had just arrived, of travelers ready to depart and of soldiers, Indians, Mexicans, negroes, loafers, merchants, tradesmen, laborers—a changing and remarkable spectacle of humanity. He saw stagecoaches with hawkers bawling for passengers to Salt Lake, Ogden, Montana, Idaho; he saw a wide white street—white with dust, where it was not thronged with moving men and women—lined by tents and canvas houses and clapboard structures and the strangest conglomeration of painted and printed signs that ever advertised anything in the world.

A woman, well clad, young, not uncomely, but with hungry eyes like those of a hawk, accosted Neale. He drew away. In the din he had not heard what she said. A boy likewise spoke to him; a greaser tried to take his luggage; a man jostling him felt of his pocket; and as Neale walked on, he was leered at, importuned, grasped, accosted and all but mobbed.

So this was Benton.

A pistol-shot pierced the din. Some one shouted. A wave of the crowd indicated commotion somewhere; and then the action and noise were precisely as before. Neale crossed five intersecting streets; evidently the wide street he was on was the main one.

In that walk of five blocks he saw thousands of persons, but they were not the soldiers who protected the line or the laborers who made the road. These were the travelers, the business people, the stragglers, the nondescript, the parasites, the criminals, the desperadoes and the idlers—all who must by hook or crook live off the builders.

Neale was conscious of a sudden exhilaration. The spirit was still in him. After all, his defeated ambition was nothing in the great sum of this work. How many had failed! He thought of the nameless graves already dotting the slopes along the line and already forgotten. It would be something to live through the heyday of Benton.

Under a sign HOTEL he entered a door in a clapboard house. The place was as crude as an unfinished barn. Paying in advance for lodgings, he went to the room shown him—a stall having a door with a bar to it, a cot and a bench, a bowl and a pitcher. Through cracks he could see out over an uneven stretch of tents and houses. Toward the edge of town stood a long string of small tents and several huge ones, which might have been the soldiers' quarters.

NEALE went out in search of a meal and entered the first restaurant. It was merely a canvas house stretched

over poles, with compartments at the back. High wooden benches served as tables, low benches as seats. The floor was sand. At one table sat a Mexican, an Irishman and a negro. The Irishman was drunk. The negro came to wait on Neale; and receiving an order, went to the kitchen. The Irishman sidled over to Neale.

"Say, did yez hear about Casey?" he inquired, very friendly.

"No, I didn't," replied Neale. He remembered Casey the flagman, but probably there were many Caseys in that camp.

"There wus a foight out on the line yisteddy," went on the fellow, "an' the dom redskins chased the gang to the troop-train. Phwat do you think? A bullet knocked Casey's pipe out of his mouth—as he was runnin'; an' b'gorra, Casey shtopped fer it an' was all shot up."

"Is he dead?" inquired Neale.

"Not yit. No bullets can't kill Casey."

"Was his pipe a short black one?"

"It was thot."

"And did Casey have it everlastingly in his mouth?"

"He shlept in it."

Neale knew that particular Casey, and he examined this loquacious Irishman more closely. He recognized him as Pat Shane, one of the trio he had known during the survey in the Black Hills two years ago. The recognition was a stab to Neale. Memory of the Black Hills—of the lost Allie Lee—was a flayed and exquisite surface on his mind. Shane had aged greatly. There were scars on his face that Neale had not seen before.

"Mister, don't I know yez?" leered Shane, studying Neale with bleary eyes. But Neale did not care to be remembered.

THE waiter brought Neale's dinner, which turned out to be a poor one at a high price. After eating, Neale went out and began to saunter along the walk. The sun had set and the wind had gone down. There was no flying dust. The street was again crowded with men, but nothing like it had been after the arrival of the train. No one paid much attention to Neale. On that walk he counted nineteen saloons, and probably some of the larger places were of like nature, but not so wide open to the casual glance.

He strolled through the town from end to end and across the railroad outside the limits, to a high bank where he sat down. The desert was beautiful, away to the west, with its dull, mottled hues backed by gold and purple, and its sweep and heave and notched horizon. Near at hand it seemed drab and bare. He watched a long train of flat- and box-cars come in, and saw that every car swarmed with soldiers and laborers. The train discharged its load of thousands and steamed back for more.

Twilight fell. All hours were difficult for Neale, but twilight was the most unendurable, for it had been the hour Allie Lee loved best and during which she and Neale had walked hand in hand along the brook, back there in the lonely and beautiful valley in the Black Hills. Neale could not sit still long; he could not rest or sleep well, or work, or be of any use to himself or anyone, because he was haunted and driven by the memory of Allie Lee. And at such quiet hours as this one, in the midst of the turmoil he had sought for weeks, a sadness filled his soul, and an eternal remorse. Then the love that had changed him, and life that had failed him, appeared completely misrelated.

To and fro he paced on the bare ridge while twilight shadowed. A star twinkled in the west; a night-wind began to stir the sand. The desert, vast, hidden, mysterious, yet so free and so untrammeled, darkened.

Lights began to flash up along the streets of Benton. And presently Neale became aware of a low and mounting hum, like a first stir of angry bees.

LOUD and challenging strains of a band drew Neale toward the center of the main street, where men were pouring into a big tent. He halted outside and watched. It took no more now than this strident, businesslike quickstep music, and sight of the men

and women attracted thereby, to make Neale realize that Benton had arisen in a day, would die out in a night, and that its life would be swift, vile and deadly.

When the band ceased, a sudden roar came from inside the big tent—a commingling of the rough voices of men, the humming of wheels, the clinking of glasses and gold, the rattling of dice, the hoarse call of a dealer, the shuffling of feet—a roar pierced now and then by the shrill, vacant, soundless laugh of a woman.

It was that last sound which almost turned Neale away from the door. He shunned women. But this place fascinated him. He went in under the flaming lamps.

The place was crowded—a huge tent stretched over a framework of wood, and it was full of people, din, smoke, movement. The floor was good planking covered with sand. Walking was possible only around the narrow aisles between groups at tables.

Neale's sauntering brought him to the bar. It had to him a familiar look, and afterward he learned it had been brought complete from St. Louis, where he had seen it in a saloon. It seemed a huge, glittering, magnificent monstrosity in that coarse, bare setting. Wide mirrors, glistening bottles, row after row of polished glasses, a brawny, villainous barkeeper with three attendants all working fast, a line of hoarse men five deep before the bar—all this constituted a scene with the aspects of a city and yet with an atmosphere no city ever knew. The drinkers were not all rough men. There were elegant, black-hatted, frock-coated men of leisure in that line—not directors and commissioners and traveling guests of the U. P. R., but gentlemen of chance. Gamblers!

The band now began a different strain of dance-music. Neale slowly worked his way around. At the end of the big tent a wide door opened into another big room—a dance-hall, full of dancers. Neale had seen nothing like this in the other construction camps.

A ball was in progress. Just now it was merry, excited, lively. Neale got inside and behind the row of crowded benches, where he stood up against a post to watch. Probably two hundred people were in the hall, most of them sitting. How singularly it struck Neale to see good-looking, bare-armed and bare-necked young women dancing there and dancing well! There were other women—painted, hollow-eyed—sad wrecks of womanhood. The male dancers were young men, as years counted, mostly unfamiliar with the rhythmic motion of feet to a tune, and they bore the rough stamp of soldiers and laborers. But there were others, as there had been before the bar, who wore their clothes differently, who had a different poise and swing—young men like Neale, whose earlier years had known some of the graces of society. They did not belong there; the young women did not belong there. The place seemed unreal. This was a merry scene, apparently with little sign, at that moment, of what it actually meant; but Neale sensed its undercurrent.

NEALE left the dance-hall. Of the gambling games he liked best both to watch and to play poker. It had interest for him. The winning or losing of money was not of great moment. Poker was not all chance or luck, such as the roll of a ball, the turn of a card, the facing up of dice. Presently he became one of an interested group around a table watching four men play.

One, a gambler in black, immaculately in contrast to his companions, had a white, hard, expressionless face, with eyes of steel, and thin lips. His hands were wonderful. Probably they never saw the sunlight, certainly no labor. They were as swift as light, too swift for the glance of an eye. But when he dealt the cards, he was slow, careful, deliberate. The stakes were gold, and the largest heap lay in front of him. One of his opponents was a giant of a fellow, young, with hulking shoulders, heated face and broken nose—a desperado if Neale ever saw one. The other two players called this strapping brute Fresno. Of these, the little man with a sallow face like a wolf was evidently too intent on the game to look up. He appeared to be losing. Beside his small pile of gold stood an empty

tumbler. The other and last player was a huge, bull-necked man whom Neale had seen before. It was difficult to place him, but after studying the red cheeks and heavy, drooping mustache, and hearing the loud voice, he recognized him as a boss of graders—a head boss. Presently the sallow-faced player called him Mull, and then Neale remembered him well.

Several of the watchers round this table lounged away, leaving a better vantage-place for Neale.

"May I sit in the game?" he inquired during a deal.

"Certainly," replied the gambler.

"Naw. We got enough," said the sallów man, and he glanced from Neale to the gambler as if he suspected them. Gamblers often worked in pairs.

"I just came to Benton," added Neale, reading the man's thought. "I never saw the gentleman in black before."

"What t'ell!" rumbled Mull, grabbing up his cards.

Fresno leered.

THE gambler leaned back, and his swift white hands flashed. Neale believed he had a derringer up each sleeve. A wrong word now would precipitate a fight.

"Excuse me," said Neale hastily. "I don't want to make trouble. I just said I never saw this gentleman before."

"Nor I him," returned the gambler courteously. "My name is Place Hough, and my word is not doubted."

Neale had heard of this famous Mississippi River gambler. So, evidently, had the other three players. The game proceeded, and when it came to Hough's deal, Mull bet hard and lost all. His big, hairy hands shook. He looked at Fresno and the other fellow, but not at Hough.

"I'm broke," he said gruffly, and he got up from the bench.

He strode past Hough, behind him; and then as if suddenly and instinctively answering to fury, he whipped out a gun.

Neale, just as instinctively, grasped the rising hand.

"Hold on, there!" he called. "Would you shoot a man in the back?"

And Neale, whose grip was powerful, caused the other to drop the gun. Neale kicked it aside. Fresno got up.

"Whar's your head, Mull?" he growled. "Git out of this!"

Attention had been attracted to Mull. Some one picked up the gun. The sallow-faced man rose, holding out his hand for it. Hough did not even turn round.

"I was goin' to hold him up," said Mull. He glared fiercely at Neale, wrenched his hand free, and with his comrades disappeared in the crowd.

The gambler rose and shook down his sleeves. The action convinced Neale that he had held a little gun in each hand.

"I saw him draw," he said. "You saved his life. Nevertheless I appreciate your action. My name is Place Hough. Will you drink with me?"

"Sure. . . . . My name is Neale."

They approached the bar and drank together.

"A railroad man, I take it?" asked Hough.

"I was. I'm foot-loose now."

A SMILE flitted across the gambler's face. "Benton is bad enough, without your being foot-loose."

"All these camps are tough," replied Neale.

"I was in North Platte, Kearney, Cheyenne and Medicine Bow during their rise," said Hough. "They were tough. But they were not Benton. And the next camp west, which will be the last—it will be roaring hell. What will be its name?"

"Why is Benton worse?" inquired Neale.

"The big work is well under way now, with a tremendous push behind. There are three men for every man's work. That lays off two men each day—drunk or dead! The place is wild—far off. There's gold—hundreds of thousands of dollars in gold dumped off the trains. Benton has had one payday. That day was the sight of my life! Then, besides time and place and gold, there are—women."

"I saw a few in the dance-hall," replied Neale.

"Then you haven't looked in at Stanton's?"

"Who's he?"

"She isn't a man," replied Hough.

Neale glanced inquiringly over his glass.

"Beauty Stanton they call her," went on Hough. "I saw her in New Orleans years ago when she was a very young woman—notorious then. She had the beauty and she led the life, did Beauty Stanton."

Neale made no comment, and Hough, turning to pay for the drinks, was accosted by several men. They wanted to play poker.

"Gentlemen, I hate to take your money," he said. "But I never refuse to sit in a game. . . . . Neale, will you join us?"

They found a table just vacated. Neale took two of the three strangers to be prosperous merchants or ranchers from the Missouri country. The third was a gambler by profession. Neale found himself in unusually sharp company. He did not have a great deal of money. So, in order to keep clear-headed, he did not drink. And he began to win, not by reason of excellent judgment, but because he was lucky. He had good cards all the time, and part of the time very strong ones. It struck him presently that these remarkable hands came during Hough's deal, and he wondered if the gambler was deliberately manipulating the cards to his advantage. At any rate, he won hundreds of dollars.

"Mr. Neale, do you always hold such cards?" asked one of the men.

"Why, sure," replied Neale.

"Well, he can't be beat," said the other.

"Lucky at cards, unlucky in love," remarked the third of the trio. "I pass."

Hough was looking straight at Neale when this last remark was made. And Neale suddenly lost his smile, his flush. The gambler dropped his glance.

"Play the game and don't get personal in your remarks," he said. "This is poker."

Neale continued to win, but his excitement did not return, nor his elation.

BY the time the game was ended, Neale sensed a friendly interest in Hough that was difficult to define or explain; and the conviction gained upon him that the gambler had deliberately dealt him those remarkable cards.

"Let's see," said Hough, consulting his watch. "Twelve o'clock! Stanton's will be humming. We'll go in."

Neale did not want to show his reluctance; yet he did not know just what to say. He went.

It seemed that all visitors who had been in the gambling-hell gravitated to this other dance-hall. The entrance appeared to be through a hotel. At least, Neale saw the hotel sign. The building was not made of canvas but of painted wood in sections, like the scenes of a stage. Men were coming and going; the hum of music and gayety came from the rear; there were rugs, pictures, chairs; this place, whatever its nature, made pretensions. Neale did not see any bar.

They entered a big room full of people, apparently doing nothing. From the opposite side, where the dance-hall opened, waved a hum that seemed at once music and discordance, gayety and wildness, with a strange, carrying undertone, raw and violent.

Hough led Neale across the room to where he could look into the dance-hall, and the young engineer Neale saw a mad, colorful flash and whirl of dancers.

Hough whispered in Neale's ear: "Stanton throws the drunks out of here."

No, it appeared the dancers were not drunk with liquor. But there was evidence of other drunkenness than that of the bottle. The floor was crowded. Looking at the mass, Neale could only see whirling and heated faces, white and clinging arms, forms swaying round and round, a wild rhythm without grace, a dance in which music was but an instrument, where men and women were lost. Neale had never seen a sight like that. He was stunned. There were no souls here. Only beasts of men, and women for whom there was no name. If death stalked in that camp, as Hough had intimated, and hell was there—then the two could not meet too soon.

If the mass and the spirit and the sense of the scene dismayed Neale, the

living beings, the creatures, the women—for the men were beyond him—confounded him with pity, consternation and stinging regret. He had loved two women—his mother and Allie; and he felt that he should love all women because they were of the same sex. Yet how impossible! Had these creatures any sex? Yet they were—at least, many were—young, gay, pretty, wild, full of life. They had swift suppleness, smiles, flashing eyes, a look at once intent and yet vacant. But few onlookers would have seen that. The eyes for which the dance was meant saw the mad whirl, the bare flesh, the brazen glance, the close embrace.

The music ended; the dancers stopped; the shuffling ceased. There were no seats unoccupied, and so the dancers walked around or formed in groups.

"WELL, I see Ruby has spotted you," observed Hough.

Neale did not gather exactly what the gambler meant, yet he associated the remark with a girl dressed in red who had paused at the door with others and looked directly at Neale. At that moment some one engaged Hough's attention.

The girl would have been striking in any company. Neale thought her neither beautiful nor pretty, but he kept on looking. Her arms were bare, her dress cut very low. Her face offered vivid contrast to the carmine on her lips. It was a round, soft face, with narrow eyes, dark, seductive, bold. She tilted her head to one side and suddenly smiled at Neale. It startled him. It was a smile with the shock of a bullet. It held Neale, so that when she crossed to him, he could not move. He felt rather than saw Hough return to his side. The girl took hold of the lapels of Neale's coat. She looked up. Her eyes were dark, with what seemed red shadows deep in them. She had white teeth. The carmined lips curled in a smile—a smile, impossible to believe, of youth and sweetness, that disclosed a dimple in her cheek. She was pretty. She was holding him—pulling him a little toward her.

"I like you!" she exclaimed.

The suddenness of the incident, the impossibility of what was happening, made Neale dumb. He felt her, saw her as if he were in a dream. Her face possessed a peculiar fascination. The sleepy, strange, seductive eyes; the provoking half-smile, teasing, alluring; the red lips, full and young through the carmine paint—all of her seemed to breathe a different kind of power from any he had ever experienced, unspiritual, elemental, strong as some heady wine. She represented youth, health, beauty terribly linked with evil wisdom.

The breath and the charm and the pestilence of her passed over Neale like fire.

"Sweetheart, will you dance with me?" she asked, with her head tilted to one side and her half-open, audacious eyes on his.

"No," replied Neale. He put her from him, gently but coldly.

She showed slow surprise.

"Why not? Can't you dance? You don't look like a gawk."

"Yes, I can dance," replied Neale.

"Then will you dance with me?" she retorted, and red spots showed through the white on her cheeks.

"I told you no," replied Neale.

HIS reply transported her into a sudden fury. She swung her hand viciously. Hough caught it, saving Neale from a sounding slap in the face.

"Ruby, don't lose your temper," remonstrated the gambler.

"He insulted me!" she cried passionately.

"He did not. Ruby, you're spoiled—"

"Spoiled—hell! Didn't he look at me—flirt with me? That's why I asked him to dance. Then he insulted me. I'll make Cordy shoot him up for it!"

"No, you wont," replied Hough, and he pulled her toward his companion, a tall woman with golden hair. "Stanton," he said, "shut her up!"

The woman addressed spoke a few words in Ruby's ear. Then the girl flounced away. But she turned with withering scorn.

"What the devil did you come in here for? You big handsome stiff!"

With that she was lost amid her mirthful companions.

Hough turned to Neale.

"The girl's a favorite. You ruffled her vanity. You see! That's Benton. If you had happened to be alone, you would have had gunplay. Be careful after this."

"But I didn't flirt with her," protested Neale. "I only looked at her—curiously, of course. And I said I wouldn't dance."

Hough laughed. "You're young in Benton. Neale, let me introduce you to the lady who saved you from some inconvenience. . . . . Miss Stanton—Mr. Neale."

And that was how Neale met Beauty Stanton. It seemed she had done him a service. He thanked her. Neale's manner with women was courteous and deferential. It showed strangely here by contrast. The Stanton woman was superb, not more than thirty years old, with a face that must have been lovely once and held the haunting ghost of beauty still.

"Where's Ancliffe?" asked Hough, addressing Stanton. She pointed, and Hough left them.

"NEALE, you're new here," affirmed the woman rather curiously.

"Didn't I look like it? I can't forget what that girl said," replied Neale.

"Tell me."

"She asked me what the devil I came here for. And she called me—"

"Oh, I heard what Ruby called you. It's a wonder it wasn't worse. She can swear like a trooper. The men are mad over Ruby. It'd be just like her to fall in love with you for snubbing her."

"I hope she doesn't," replied Neale.

"May I ask—what did you come here for?"

"You mean here to your dance-hall? Why, Hough brought me. I met him. We played cards, and—"

"No. I mean what brought you to Benton?"

"I just drifted here. . . . . But I'm looking for a—a lost friend."

"No work? You're no spiker or capper or boss. I know that sort. And I can spot a gambler a mile! The whole world meets out here in Benton. But not many young men like you wander into my place."

"Like me? How so?"

"The men here are wolves. But you—you're like my friend Ancliffe?"

"Who is he?" asked Neale politely.

"*Who* is he? God only knows. But he's an Englishman and a gentleman. It's a pity men like Ancliffe and you drift out here."

She spoke seriously. She had the accent and manner of breeding.

"Why, Miss Stanton?" inquired Neale. He was finding another woman here interesting to him.

"Because it means wasted life. You don't work. You're not crooked. You can't do any good. And only a knife in the back or a bullet from some drunken bully's gun awaits you!"

AT this point Hough returned with a pale, slender man whose clothes and gait were not American. Hough introduced him as Ancliffe. Neale felt in the introduction a stimulus to an accumulating interest. Benton might be hell, but he was meeting new types of men and women. Ancliffe was fair; he had a handsome face that held a story, and tired blue eyes that looked out wearily and mildly, without curiosity or hope. An Englishman of broken fortunes!

"Just arrived, eh?" he said to Neale. "Rather jolly here, don't you think?"

"A fellow's not going to stagnate in Benton," replied Neale.

"Not while he's alive," interposed Stanton.

"Miss Stanton, that idea seems to persist with you—the brevity of life," said Neale, smiling. "What are the average days for a mortal in this bloody Benton?"

"Days! You mean hours. I call the night blessed that some one is not dragged out of my place. And I don't sell drinks! I've saved Ancliffe's life nine times I know of. Either he hasn't any sense, or he wants to get killed."

"I assure you it's the former," said the Englishman.

"But my friends, I'm serious," she returned earnestly. "This awful place is getting on my nerves. Mr. Neale here, he would have had to face a gun already, but for me."

"Miss Stanton, I appreciate your

act," replied Neale. "But it doesn't follow that if I had to face a gun I'd be sure to go down."

"You can throw a gun?" questioned Hough.

"I had a cowboy gun-thrower for a partner for years—out on the surveying of the road. He's the friend I mentioned."

"Boy, you're courting death!" exclaimed Stanton.

THE music started up again. Conversation was scarcely worth while during the dancing. Neale watched as before. Twice while he gazed at the whirling couples he caught the eyes of the girl Ruby upon him. They were expressive of pique, resentment, curiosity. Neale did not look that way any more. Besides, his attention was otherwise attracted. Hough yelled in his ear to watch the fun. A fight had started. A strapping fellow wearing a belt containing gun and bowie-knife had jumped upon a table just as the music stopped. He was drunk. He looked like a young workman ambitious to be a desperado.

"Ladies an' gen'l'men," he bawled. "I been—requested to sing."

Yells and hoots answered him. He glared ferociously around, trying to pick out one of his insulters. Something was thrown at him from behind, and it struck him. He wheeled, unsteady upon his feet. Then several men, bareheaded and evidently attendants of the hall, made a rush for him. The table was upset. The would-be singer went down in a heap, and he was pounced upon, handled like a sack and thrown out. The crowd roared its glee.

"The worst of that is that those fellows 'most always come back, drunk and ugly," said Stanton. "Then we all begin to run or dodge."

"Your men didn't lose time with that rowdy," remarked Neale.

"I've hired all kinds of men to keep order," she replied. "Laborers, ex-sheriffs, gun-men, bad-men! The Irish are the best on the job, but they wont stick. I've got eight men here now, and they're a tough lot. I'm scared to death of them. I believe they rob my guests. But what can I do? Without somebody I couldn't run the place. It'll be the death of me!"

Neale did not doubt that. He did not see how it would be possible for a place like this to last long. It could not. The life brought out the worst in men.

He found an added curiosity in studying the faces of Ancliffe and Hough. The Englishman had run his race. Any place would suit him for the end. Neale saw this and marveled at the man's ease and grace and amiability. He reminded Neale of Larry Red King—the same cool, easy, careless air. Ancliffe would die game. Hough was not affected by this sort of debauched life any more than he would have been by another kind. He preyed on men. He looked on with cold, gray, expressionless face. Possibly he too would find an end in Benton.

THESE reflections, passing swiftly, made Neale think of himself. What was true for others must be true for him. The presence of any of these persons, of Hough and Ancliffe, of himself in Beauty Stanton's gaudy resort was sad proof of a disordered life.

Some one touched him, interrupted his thought.

"You've had trouble?" asked Stanton, who had turned from the others.

"Yes," he said.

"Well, we've all had that. You seem young to me."

Hough turned to speak to Stanton. "Ruby's going to make trouble."

"No!" exclaimed the woman, with eyes lighting.

Neale then saw that the girl Ruby, with a short, bold-looking fellow who packed a gun, and several companions of both sexes, had come in from the dance-hall to take up a position near him. Stanton went over to them. She drew Ruby aside and talked to her. The girl showed none of the passion that had marked her manner a little while before. Presently Stanton returned.

"Ruby's got over her temper," she said with evident relief, to Neale. "She asked me to say that she apologized. It's just what I told you. She'll fall madly in love with you for what you

did. . . . . She's of good family, Neale. She has a sister she talks of—and a home she could go back to if she wasn't ashamed."

"That so?" replied Neale, thoughtfully. "Let me talk to her."

At a slight sign, Ruby joined them.

"Ruby, you've already introduced yourself to this gentleman, but not so nicely as you might have," said Stanton. "I'm sorry," replied Ruby. A certain wistfulness changed her.

"Maybe I was rude," said Neale. "I didn't intend to be. I couldn't dance with anyone here—or anywhere." Then he spoke to her in an aside. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. I won a thousand dollars to-night. I'll give you half of it if you'll go home!"

The girl shrank as if she had received a stab. Then she stiffened.

"Why don't *you* go home?" she retorted. "We're all going to hell out here. And the gamest get there soonest!"

She glared at Neale an instant, white-faced and hard, and then rejoining her companions, she led them away.

Beauty Stanton seemed to have received something of the check that had changed the girl Ruby.

"Gentlemen," she said, "you are my only friends in Benton. But these are business hours."

Presently she leaned toward Neale and whispered to him.

"Boy, you're courting death. Some one—something—has hurt you. But you're young. . . . *Go home!*"

Then she bade him good night and left the group.

NEALE looked on in silence after that. And presently, when Ancliffe departed, he was glad to follow Hough into the street. There the same confusion held. A loud throng hurried by as if bent on cramming into a few hours the life that would not last long.

Neale was interested to inquire more about Ancliffe. And the gambler replied that the Englishman had come from no one knew where, that he did not go to extremes in drinking or betting, that he evidently had become attached to Beauty Stanton, that he surely must be a ruined man of class.

"Stanton took to you," went on Hough. "I saw that. . . . . And poor Ruby! I'll tell you, Neale, I'm sorry for some of these women."

"Who wouldn't be?"

"Women of this class are strange to you, Neale. But I've mixed with them for years. Of course, Benton sets a pace no man ever saw before. Still, even the hardest and vilest of these scullions sometimes shows an amazing streak of good. And women like Ruby and Beauty Stanton, whose early surroundings must have been refined—they are beyond understanding. They will cut your heart out for a slight, and sacrifice their lives for a courteous word. It was your manner that cut Ruby and won Beauty Stanton. They meet with neither coldness nor courtesy out here. It must be bitter as gall for a woman like Stanton to be treated as you treated her—with respect. Yet see how it got her!"

"I didn't see anything in particular," replied Neale.

"You were too excited and disgusted with the whole scene," said Hough, as they reached the roaring lights of the gambling-hell. "Will you go in and play again? There are always open games."

"No—unless you think—"

"Boy, I think nothing except that I liked your company and that I owe you a service. Good night."

Neale walked to his lodgings tired and thoughtful and moody. Behind him the roar lulled and swelled. It was three o'clock in the morning. He wondered when these night-hawks slept. He wondered where Larry was. As for himself, he found slumber not easily gained. Dawn was lighting the east when he at last fell asleep.

With Allie and Neale in the same town, unknown to each other, one episode of the next installment may be surmised; but there are others, no less interesting, that will surprise you. Be sure to read that next installment in the September issue — on sale August 1st.

"Once a Mason"

by Albert Payson Terhune

RAGNAR BROCK had been promoted to Hillburgh from New York. He had come to Hillburgh to take over his late uncle's interests in the paper-mill.

From a city of six million people to a city of thirty thousand means more of a change than can be found by the dividing of six million by thirty thousand. Brock and Vida, his very much worshiped wife, speedily learned this. And they liked the change; the longer they lived in Hillburgh, the more they liked it, and the less they missed New York.

Among other things they found that individuality counts for more in a small city, that neighborliness is something better than a pretty name, that a newcomer is accepted or rejected—on his own merits or on their lack—with an almost dizzying quickness and completeness.

During the four years of their wedded life, the Brocks had lived on Manhattan Island, in a flat that rented at the price of a fourteen-room suburban villa. They had not known the names of their next-door neighbors, and they had not cared to. They had not known whether the house directly across the street from them was a faith-cure temple or an opium dive, nor whether the obese man in the white waistcoat who passed them several nights on their way home from the theater, was a Wall Street magnate or a delicatessen dealer.

Friends, in New York, they had—friends aplenty, people whom they had known for any length of time from a week up. But it was a feat of memory to follow these people's ever-shifting changes of address. Nor, except by chance, did the Brocks meet any of them in other than prearranged social hours. Their best friends were forever leaving town for some new business-base; and new friends from the hinterland were forever drifting into their lives.

As to the parentage or early history or general antecedents of most of these acquaintances, the Brocks were wholly ignorant. For New York is a city of strangers. Its population swirls and mills and ebbs and swells and scatters too constantly for such personal footholds as the lesser towns afford. Yes, it is a city of strangers—a city the old-timers of which are often of more recent date than the inhabitants of many a Western boom-town. Scarcely one New Yorker in twenty was born in the city he so proudly (and loudly) acclaims as his own.

THE Brocks found everything different in Hillburgh — charmingly different. They came thither well

recommended and with a ready-made place in the community. The Hillburghers looked them over keenly, decided in secret caucus that the two newcomers were decidedly the right sort—and forthwith welcomed them with open arms.

There was a hominess about the place, a friendly intimacy, a solidity, that delighted the Brocks. It was nice to have real "next-door neighbors," for the first time in their lives. It was pleasant to "run in" on these new friends at unconventional times, to have a genuine "church home," to live in a house instead of a flat, to sit in the vine-shadows of the veranda on summer nights and hear the soft voices and laughter of other porch-sitters along the same tree-lined block.

Even bits of neighborhood gossip had a tang of spicy novelty to Vida. She found joy in simple afternoon card-clubs, in the work of her church's "ladies' auxiliary," in the unhidden pleasures and sorrows of her new-gained cronies.

To Ragnar Brock the local business-clique held out equally cordial hands. He was accepted on his own worth; and as that worth was considerable, he presently found himself a power in his little financial and social world.

But almost from the first he came in contact with one element of the community—a big element—the portals of which he could not pass. At Hillburgh's single club and at the houses of a hundred worth-while people he was made to feel snugly at home. Yet there was something—a tremendously important something—in which he was an outsider. On alternate Tuesday and Friday evenings the club was half empty and the men-folk in three fourths of the best families in town were not in their own dwellings. When Brock first noticed this, he asked the reason.

"The Capstone Lodge meets on the first, third and fifth Friday nights of the months," said his informant, as if wondering at such ignorance. "And the Orient Lodge meets on the second and fourth Tuesday nights."

"Lodge?" asked Ragnar; then: "Oh, you mean Masonic Lodges? But the whole male population of Hillburgh surely doesn't go to a lodge every alternate week?"

"No," was the simple answer, "not the whole male population, of course. Only the best of the male population."

BROCK looked dubiously at the man, wondering at his statement and trying to find a possible joke in it. But no joke was there. He asked other men the same question, and from most of them he received a like reply.

It puzzled him. And the longer he lived in Hillburgh the more he was puzzled.

All his days, he had heard in a general way of Freemasonry. Vaguely he remembered reading somewhere that there are about three million Masons in the United States. Some of his best friends in New York had worn square-and-compass pins or watch-charms. But the thing had in no way touched his own life.

Yet here in Hillsburgh—as in hundreds of other small cities—Freemasonry seemed to be the very backbone of masculine life. The strongest, most representative men were Masons. So were the pick of the younger and livelier set. It seemed as much an integral part of their existence as did home or office or church.

From wonder Brock passed to curiosity, from curiosity to a sense of grievance. His closest friends here were Masons. Yet men who cordially welcomed him to every other phase of their lives did not even hint at a desire to have him as a member of their lodge.

This neglect touched him to the quick. And at last, he made occasion to speak of it to his chum and business partner and next-door neighbor, Harry Cowan.

"Look here!" said Brock without preamble. "You put me up at the club. You asked me to go to your church. And I've dined with you a dozen times. What's the matter with me, anyhow? Is there anything that would make me unfit to be in your lodge?"

"Why, certainly not," returned Cowan in some astonishment at Brock's vehemence, "why should there be?"

"Then," insisted Ragnar, "why in blazes haven't you or some of the others ever asked me to join?"

"I thought you knew," answered Cowan gravely. "I thought everyone knew. It isn't a secret. By our rules no man can be asked to become a Mason. He must make voluntary application. And he must understand mighty well what he is going in for, when he applies. Masonry's not a club or a graft or a joke. We look on it as about the biggest thing in our lives."

IT was perhaps six weeks later that Ragnar Brock came home one evening from the office and gave Vida the joyous news that his application had been favorably received by the Capstone Lodge. He was to go up for initiation on the following night.

Vida was duly and dutifully elated by the tidings. She knew how enthusiastic over Masonry Ragnar had grown of late, and how much he had dreaded the single blackball that would have barred him from membership.

Anything that interested Ragnar interested Vida. To keep abreast of this latest ambition of his, she had even read and reread "The Encyclopedia Britannica's" three-page article on Freemasonry. True, most of the article had been Greek to her. Yet it had impressed her with the antiquity and solemnity of the institution. She had also been pleased that her husband was to join a brotherhood whose roll included such names as those of Shakespeare, Washington, Maréchal Ney, and kings Louis XVIII and Edward VII.

But a chance scrap of talk with Mrs. Harry Cowan, that day, had done more than all these things put together to whet her interest.

"Listen!" she said as Brock finished the recital of his election. "Blanche Cowan got me awfully excited by something she told me. You know how mushily devoted she and Harry are. Well, in spite of that, she can't get him to tell her one thing that goes on inside his lodge—none of the secrets, or anything. Isn't that queer? She says it used to make her dreadfully unhappy, just at first. She's more accustomed to it now, but she's still terribly curious about it all. She says she'd give anything to find out."

"But," suggested Ragnar, "as I understand it, Masons aren't supposed to tell anybody the secrets or mysteries of their order. There was a chap named Morgan, nearly a hundred years back, who wrote a fake 'exposure' of Masonry, you know. Of course, it was a gigantic hoax, from beginning to end. It was such rot that the Masons haven't even bothered to make an official denial of it. The *real* secrets have never been told to anyone. So Mrs. Cowan can't expect—"

"But she *did* expect," contradicted Vida. "She feels, just as you and I feel, that a husband and wife have no right to keep even the triflingest secrets from each other. And it hurts her to have Harry refuse to—"

"Good Lord!" broke in Brock. "It surely isn't going to make *you* unhappy, dear, when I keep mum about Masonry, is it?"

"NOT for a minute," was Vida's cheery response, "not for one single minute—because you aren't going to keep any of your Masonic secrets away from me."

"But—"

"You're not!" declared Vida. "Why, Ragnar, you *couldn't*. We promised each other, ever and ever so solemnly, that time, just after our wedding, that we'd never keep anything from each other. It was your own suggestion, too. Don't you remember it was? You said nine tenths of married unhappiness came from husbands and wives not telling each—"

"I know," he faltered. "I know. But this—well, this seems to me kind of —different."

"How is it different?" challenged Vida. "How? Show me how. And haven't I always kept *my* share of the bargain? For instance, didn't I tell you, right away, about Myrtle's engagement—even when I'd promised her, ever so earnestly, that I wouldn't breathe a word to anyone about it? And you said it was all right for me to tell you, because you and I are one. Well, if we were one about Myrtle's engagement, we're one about Masonry too. That's good logic, isn't it?"

Vida beamed triumphantly upon her

doubting spouse. Ragnar scratched his chin reflectively.

"I—I suppose so," he said presently in feeble surrender.

"Besides," she clinched her victory, "even if you *do* promise the Masons not to tell, you've already promised always to tell me *everything*. So my promise takes precedence over theirs—just as you say a first mortgage does, over a second. Oh, it will be so great, to be the only non-Mason on earth to know the secrets of a Mason! Blanche will be green with envy of me."

"Hold on!" demanded Ragnar crossly. "You'll keep to yourself what I tell you, please, and not go dishing it out to the neighbors. Just remember that."

"Even if you get tired of the lodge and stop being a Mason?" asked Vida wistfully.

"It's for life," was his curt answer. "'Once a Mason always a Mason.'"

LONG past midnight, next evening, Ragnar Brock reached home after his initiation. He came in very quietly, but Vida was not asleep. Wrapped in a filmy pink negligee and with her bare feet stuck into ridiculous little pomponed pink satin mules, her fluffy hair tumbling around her face and bare shoulders, her big blue eyes dark with excitement, she ran down the stairs to meet him the moment she heard his latchkey in the lock.

"Tell me!" she cried tremblingly, eager as a child on Christmas Eve.

Brock hung up his hat and coat without answering. His look was troubled.

"Tell me!" she exclaimed again. "Tell me all about it."

"Girl, dear," said Ragnar as she caught his coat-lapels and planted herself squarely in front of him, her upturned face alight, "you'll have to let me off of my promise. I can't tell you. I didn't realize—"

"Can't tell me?" she gasped, keenly hurt. "Oh, Ragnar! And you promised—"

"I didn't realize what I was promising—or what a tremendous thing it is," he protested, an aftermath of solemnity still lingering in his voice and manner. "I never guessed it would mean all it does. I'd sooner bite my tongue in half than tell—even *you*. I understand, now, why no one has ever told, and why Masons don't bother to deny Morgan's book of silly lies. I—"

"Ragnar!" she broke in. "You can't break your word to me. You *can't*. And you promised. Not only when we made that agreement, after our wedding, but yesterday you promised again. We agreed that your pledge to me would have to take precedence over your pledge to the Masons. Don't you remember? Just as a first mortgage takes—"

"I know," he interrupted, "I know. But I can't tell. That's all there is to it. I can't. I'm sorry. And now let's go to bed, sha'n't we? I'm pretty tired. And I have to be at the office by eight."

She turned away stiffly and without a word walked off to her own room. Every line in her supple body spelled chagrin, anger, bitterly hurt feelings.

NEXT morning at the breakfast-table Vida was dry-eyed. But Brock read traces of tears on her lashes. And her face was pallid from sleeplessness. She turned an uninspiring cheek to his proffered good-morning kiss. And throughout breakfast she answered him only in the iciest monosyllables. It was a drearily bleak meal. And it was but the first of a series. Home-evenings, too, became a horror.

Vida Brock was giving her miserable husband the silence-cure—a species of refined domestic torture which, in a sixteenth-century inquisition chamber, would have caused public scandal and a popular demand for its abolition. Nor could all Ragnar's best-meant efforts break the spell. Vida stonily refused to reply to his arguments and frantic pleas. He saw she was not acting thus from ill temper, but through a sincere sense of personal injury, and that she was terribly wounded by what she deemed his breach of faith.

He stood it as long as he could. At last one evening he cornered her in the library and forced a show-down.

"Look here!" he began, taking her

by the shoulders as she loftily moved away. "I'm sick of this. You're treating me as if I'd robbed the First National and murdered your mother and then eloped with Sarah Bernhardt. It's gone far enough. I'm—"

"I don't care to discuss it, please," she said.

It was the longest sentence she had spoken in nearly a week.

"But we've got to discuss it, whether you 'care to' or not. Another week in the eternal silences will send me to the foolish-house or to the bar. You're sore because I can't break my word and tell you the things I pledged myself not to. Well, you're—"

"I don't want to talk about it!" was the frozen comment.

"Here's the point where I'm supposed to slam out of the house and come back drunk at three A. M.," he went on. "Well, I'm not going to. You are behaving like a pig-headed little crank. And it's got to stop. I'm going to make it stop."

"Oh?" she queried with infantile irony. "You are going to be honest, then, and tell me—as you promised?"

"I—I have no right to!" he fumed.

"You have no right not to," she countered, swift to note his sign of weakening. "You *promised*. You have no right to have secrets from me. Your secrets are my secrets. We are one person. God made us one, at the altar. If we tell each other anything, it isn't like telling it to another person. It is like telling it to oneself. We agreed on that long ago. The Bible says so too."

"The Bible says you and I should tell—"

"It says, 'They twain shall be one,'" she quoted. "And it's just like telling a secret to yourself, to tell it to me. Your secrets *are* my secrets, Ragnar. Oh, if you knew how fearfully unhappy you've been making me! It isn't the secrets themselves, so much as knowing there's something that's come between us and that we aren't really one, any more. It's—"

SHE began to cry—not daintily or for effect, but whole-heartedly, like a very little child. Ragnar groaned aloud and threw up his hands.

"Oh, all right!" he yielded growlingly. "All right! I give in. Whether I'm committing a mortal sin or not, it's better than breaking your heart and making my home a hell. Go ahead. What do you want to know about the Masons?"

She dried her eyes. Or rather a dazzling smile of relief and of happiness dried them for her. She threw her arms around her sulky husband's neck, whispering:

"Oh, I'm so glad! So *glad*. Now we're one again. I've had such a hideous week, darling!"

"You've had nothing on me!" he said ungraciously.

"And now," she added, unhearing, "tell me all about it. Everything! I know a little, already, from things Blanche Cowan has told me—things she picked up by accident. Things about a goat and wearing aprons and all that. It didn't make much sense to me."

"I can't tell you why they wear aprons," he answered, "because it isn't revealed to us until we have been members of a lodge for three years and one month."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. It's part of the ritual. At the end of thirty-seven months, we are told. When that time comes, I'll tell you."

"What about a goat?" she asked. "Or is that a joke? Blanche said she believed it was."

"It isn't a joke," he denied. "It is symbolic. Masons speak to outsiders about 'riding a goat,' to throw them off the track. It has a secret meaning. It —oh, I feel like a cur to tell this! I'm no better than a perjurer."

"If you prefer to break faith with your own wife—" began Vida, threatening a return of the week's frostiness.

"Oh, drop it," he demanded, with the snappishness of a beaten man. "I'll tell you. It's better than being frozen. *Goat* is English for a Latin word which is the secret word of the Masons. It is a word that the whole fabric of Masonry is built on."

"What is the word?" she asked, avidly.

Dropping his voice, and looking cautiously about him, he muttered:

"*Capricorn!*"

"Well?" she asked, somewhat disappointed.

"*Capricorn* is the secret and sacred word of Masonry," he explained, as if wondering that she took the pregnant tidings so carelessly. "Masonry is based on the twelve signs of the zodiac. And Capricornus is the twelfth and most sacred sign. The walls of a lodge are painted to represent the stellar system. And the constellation of Capricorn is in the center. It is the central point of Freemasonry; and it had its beginnings in prehistoric times. Some say it was when Zeus decreed the quartering of the heavens. Others are inclined to believe it is of later origin and dates back only to the Ming-Tsu dynasty in Mongolia, when the Emperor Han-Kse-Fuang—"

"Never mind the dry history part of it!" she interposed impatiently. "You said you'd tell me the secrets of—"

"I did," he returned, "and I am telling you. What I've just quoted is from the Golden Ritual—the deepest secret of every lodge. I'm sorry I can't regale you with merry tales about our eating live babies or plotting to turn America over to the Chinese. But it happens we don't go in for such melodramatic things as those. So all I can do, in breaking my pledge to the Order for your sake, is to tell you the real secrets. And I'm telling them, as fast as you'll let me. If they fail to thrill you, don't blame me."

"Go on," she said penitently, and yet with an obvious flagging of interest. "I'm sorry I interrupted. Suppose you begin at the beginning. What happened first?"

"WHEN I entered the lodge," he said, each word of the inviolable secret wrung from him with visible effort, "I was met at the door by thirty-seven members—37, by the way, is the mystic number, in Freemasonry; I'll explain its meaning presently. Well, then, I was met by thirty-seven brethren. They were all clad in white robes—"

"White robes?"

"Snow-white, and of shimmering satin, to typify the thirty-seven stars in the constellation of Capricornus. And each of the thirty-seven had a lighted taper fastened to his left temple—light of the stars, you see—and on the left side, to symbolize the heart. They—"

"Do you mean to say Harry Cowan—with that big waist-line and bristly red mustache of his—wore a white satin robe, with a taper over his left ear?" exclaimed Vida, breaking into a gust of laughter at the mental vision she conjured up.

"If you choose to make a joke of our solemn ceremonials—" said Ragnar, getting to his feet and fairly vibrant with hurt dignity.

"Oh, I didn't mean to offend you!" she pleaded. "I'm sorry. Go on."

"Before they escorted me into the lodge," pursued Brock, "the Past Master Emeritus—that is the tenth-highest officer in the lodge—the Past Master Emeritus taught me the secret gesture that goes with the secret word *Capricorn*. It was this:"

Brock raised two fingers to his upper lip as though stroking an imaginary mustache.

"Why!" cried Vida with a brief renewal of interest in the recital, "I've seen men do that, hundreds of times. I just supposed they were feeling to find out if their upper lips needed to be shaved."

"They were Masons," explained Ragnar, "Masons who were thus secretly saluting some fellow Mason."

"Isn't that queer?" mused Vida. "What happened next?"

"I went into the lodge with them and was shown the zodiac-signs on the walls, and they told me about Capricornus—just as I explained a few minutes ago. Last of all the Assistant Stargazer taught me how to find Capricornus in the sky. And in thirty-seven months I am to be taught more of the Order's mysteries. That's all. I came home then."

"All?" repeated Vida blankly. "Do you mean to tell me there was nothing but the silly things you've described?"

"If they seem silly to your omniscient feminine mind, I'm sorry I wasted breath and broke my word in telling them to you," was the offended retort.

"For centuries Masonry has been a great and beautiful thing in the eyes of men. It remained for one all-wise woman to discover it was silly. Don't let's talk about it any more, please."

He put on his hat and stalked out of the house. Nor did he come home until bedtime. Next day at breakfast he met Vida's overtures of friendliness with a frigidity as complete as had been her own.

WHEN he came home for dinner, it was evident his sense of grievance had not yet abated. Nor, during the evening meal, could Vida storm his position of offense. The maid being in the dining-room most of the time, there was no chance for uninterrupted personal talk until Brock and his wife adjourned to the library.

"Stop being cross and horried!" Vida commanded as soon as she and Ragnar were alone. "There's no sense in being woozzey with me, just beçause I didn't think your old Masonry was anything wonderful. You were my husband long before you were a Mason, you know."

"I'll try not to think about the guying things you said," replied Brock, still glumly. "But they did rile me a lot. For one woman to declare Masonry is silly struck me as—"

"It isn't just one woman," she defended herself, nettled at his tone. "Blanche Cowan agrees with me. So do Mrs. Gruger and Mrs. Osum. We were playing bridge to-day, we four, and they all agreed it was senseless—"

"Who agreed *what?*" barked Ragnar, his body suddenly tense, his eyes dilating.

"When I told them all that stuff about tapers and shimmering white satin robes and *Capricorn* and the zodiac and stroking the upper lip and—Ragnar Brock!" she interrupted herself. "What on earth is the matter?"

For her husband had lunged to his feet, and towered above her, breathing heavily—his mouth wide, his gaze horror-shot. He seemed to be trying to speak. But he could only gurgle. He looked like a man on the brink of apoplexy.

"Ragnar!" Vida repeated in genuine alarm. "What is it? What's the matter?"

"You—you don't really mean—you don't mean to say you—you *told* the things I revealed to you about Masonry?" he gasped, all but incoherent. "You—you told them to a parcel of women?"

"What if I did?" And Vida rushed right valiantly to the defense, albeit she wriggled a little under his accusingly terrified glare. "What if I did? Where was the harm? Besides, it wasn't to a parcel of women—only just three dear friends of mine. And I made them promise, ever so solemnly, to keep it to themselves. All their husbands are Masons. And they—and they— Ragnar! Stop looking at me like that!" she cried, a catch of fear in her voice. "Stop doing those things with your face! You scare me! I—"

"You told those three women the sacred secrets I confided to you?" he babbled dazedly. "You *told*—"

"I didn't tell any sacred secrets!" she declared. "Those things you told me aren't of any importance at all. If they had been, I'd never have breathed them. You men may think the secrets are mightily important and sacred and all that. But they're really just stupid nonsense; we all four agreed on that—just as nonsensical as the make-believe secrets a kindergarten baby might tell its mother. It's—"

"You *told?*" he panted, breathing thickly. "You told—"

"YES," she shrilled, her nerves on edge, "if you put it that way, I *told*. Don't ask that crazy question again! It sounds like a cuckoo-clock. 'You told—*you told*—YOU TOLD'—over and over again, like a—"

"Vida," interrupted Brock, gaining some slight control over himself by manifest effort, and slumping heavily into the nearest chair, "you don't even realize what you've done. You don't even realize you've made me betray a trust more sacred than any other that could be placed upon me. You have blabbed the secrets of Freemasonry to three women—wives of Masons. Those women will be telling it all over town.

The secrets of the greatest and oldest Order on earth will be jabbered to everyone. And all through *my* unworthiness!"

"Oh, I'll take any blame there is!" sniffed Vida, seeking desperately to combat the vague dread which her husband's awed words were beginning to awaken in her. "I'll say it's all my fault, if there's any question about it. But there wont be. None of those three women will tell. I know them. They're as close-mouthed as—"

"As you are?" ventured Brock drearily, adding: "For thousands of years the secrets of Freemasonry have been kept inviolate. Why? Because, of the millions and millions of men to whom those secrets were intrusted, not one until now has ever violated his trust. Babblers and reticent men alike, they have guarded the secrets of the Order —even in delirium. For centuries and centuries they have guarded them. Men who could not keep an ordinary secret have kept Masonry's. It remained for Ragnar Brock to betray his fellow Masons and to turn their holy privacy into public chatter. There doesn't seem to be much doubt that I'm the archtraitor of—"

"You sha'n't say such things about yourself," she flashed. "They're not true. You told no one except your own wife. And you had a right to tell me. It was your duty. You're making a great fuss over nothing. What harm could it do Freemasonry, if all the world should find out that the secret word is *Capricorn* and that the mystic number is 37 and that its members wear white satin robes and—"

"It can't do Freemasonry any harm," he said slowly. "Freemasonry's too big a thing for any one man or any million men to harm. But it can wreck Ragnar Brock, for all time."

"Nonsense!"

"Possibly," he agreed with grim satire. "Possibly! Perhaps it is nonsense to believe that millions of Masons all over the world will hold my name in abhorrence for betraying them. Perhaps it is nonsense to think that my business colleagues and friends here in Hillburgh will turn from me as our country turned from Benedict Arnold. Perhaps I can hold up my head again in a community whose backbone is Freemasonry, after I have violated that community's confidence and proved myself a liar—a man whose sworn word is worthless. Perhaps I can do all this. Your feminine wisdom which teaches you to sneer at an Order that all men revere—your wisdom may find a way out. But in *my* ignorance, a bit of lead through my skull seems the only decent solution."

SHE cried out, at this, and clung to him.

"Ragnar! Sweetheart!" she whimpered. "I can't let you suffer like this. I—I didn't see how it might make other men think of you. And anyhow, none of those three women will breathe one word of it to a soul. If you like, I'll call them up, all three of them, and—"

"And find they've told no one but a few close friends?" he suggested. "No, dear. It's too late. If *you* couldn't keep a secret, how can you expect three other women to be any more honest?"

"Honest?" she echoed, flinching.

"Yes, *honest!*" he reiterated fiercely. "You would think it dishonest to take the contents of my strong-box and give them to a bunch of women. Is it any more honest to take the close-guarded contents of my brain and throw them to the same women?"

"But—"

"A man's honor is always in his wife's hands," said Brock, "and there is more than one way for her to defile it. In the most common way, she does it so as to make him nothing worse than a laughingstock or an object of pity. But *you* have done worse. You've proven me unworthy of trust or of any white man's friendship. You've made an outcast of me.

"Yes, I suppose I pain you by talking like that," he continued as she winced and covered her face with her hands. "But isn't it true? Haven't you given me the distinction of being the first man in the world to break his trust with Freemasonry? If I were alone in life, I could pay the debt by killing myself. And it would be a lot easier than to face the men I've betrayed. As it is, I suppose we'll have

to go away somewhere and begin all over again under some other name. It's the only feasible way out."

"Ragnar!" she sobbed. "Oh, I'm so ashamed! So *ashamed!* And it was all my—"

"You are fond of saying my secrets are your secrets," went on Brock in the same dead tone. "Did it never occur to you that my honor is your honor too? And you very blithely threw that honor away, for the sake of a chance to hold the center of the stage for a few minutes at a card-party. You didn't even get thirty pieces of silver for—"

HE could not go on. She was crouched at his feet in a forlornly crumpled little heap, crying hysterically, mumbling incoherent pleas for forgiveness.

"Let it go at that," he said presently, when he had lifted her to his lap and soothed her into momentary calm. "What's done is done. I'll gain nothing by snarling or scolding. It wont help. Now I am going to call up Harry Cowan and tell him what I've done, and say I'm ready to stand for any penalty my brother Masons may see fit to inflict. If they let me remain in the lodge, will you promise—"

"I promise anything," she pledged. "Oh, darling, I'm not the kind of fool who has to be taught the same lesson twice."

"Good!" he approved. "Then, this thing may teach you that, though a husband and wife are one, they have two sets of brains and two sets of individualities, and that neither has the right to tamper with the other's. If it does teach you that, then it's less of a tragedy than we have any right to hope—even if I'm disgraced for life and branded as a Judas."

He went into an anteroom, shut the door and called up a number on the telephone. Cowan himself answered the summons. At sound of the archtraitor's voice, Cowan broke into laughter.

"Brock, you old Machiavelli!" he hailed his friend, "what wall-eyed rot have you been telling your wife, about Capricorns and tapers and white satin nighties and zodiacs? Blanche is out, now, informing half the neighborhood about it."

"Well," said Brock apologetically, "I had to do *something* to choke off the silence cure, didn't I? And for an impromptu effort—"

"It's an impromptu effort that's going to cost you a round of drinks, next time you show your face at the club!" declared Cowan. "How about dropping in there for an hour, to-night?"

"I'll be there in half an hour," agreed Ragnar, "and pay up like a little man."

PRESENTLY he returned to his wife. His face was calm but stony.

"I have confessed," he said. "But there was no need. Those three women have spent the evening telling everyone in sight. A special meeting of the lodge was called two hours ago. The brethren have agreed that we are to pretend the secrets I revealed to you are all a joke. In that way we can avoid exposure. It is better luck than I had any right to expect. But I'm sorry it will put you in the light of a woman whose husband has been nagged into telling her a string of whoppers."

"Oh, what do I care for that!" she exclaimed. "I'm only too glad to let people think so. If you like, I'll say I knew it was a joke all along. Will that help?"

"I think it might," he assented after a moment's deep thought. "It wont make you exactly popular with those three women you blabbed to. But nothing in this life is on the free list. Besides, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you are the only living woman who knows the innermost secrets of Freemasonry. At least, the only woman who *knows* she knows them."

"And—and they will forgive you?"

"Cowan has interceded splendidly in my behalf," said Brock. "And all the married men in the lodge backed him up—for reasons best known to themselves—and to you. They saved me. But I am sentenced to pay a heavy penalty. I have no right to tell you what that penalty is. It is a matter of spirit rather than of flesh. I am going there now, to pay it. I may be home late. So don't bother to sit up for me."

Another story by Albert Payson Terhune in an early issue.

The New Stories of Tarzan

Tarzan Rescues the Moon

by Edgar Rice Burroughs

THE moon shone down out of a cloudless sky—a huge, swollen moon that seemed so close to earth that one might have wondered that it did not brush the crooning tree-tops. It was night, and Tarzan was abroad in the jungle—Tarzan the ape-man, mighty fighter, mighty hunter. Why he swung through the dark shadows of the somber forest he could not have told you. It was not that he was hungry; he had fed well this day, and in a safe cache were the remains of his kill, ready against the coming of a new appetite. Perhaps it was the very joy of living that urged him from his arboreal couch to pit his muscles and his senses against the jungle night; moreover Tarzan always was goaded by an intense desire to know.

The jungle which is presided over by Kudu the Sun is a very different jungle from that of Goro the Moon. The diurnal jungle has its own aspect—its own lights and shades, its own birds, its own blooms, its own beasts; its noises are the noises of the day. The lights and shades of the nocturnal jungle are as different as might be the lights and shades of another world from those of our world; its beasts, its blooms and its birds are not those of the jungle of Kudu the Sun.

Because of these differences Tarzan loved to investigate the jungle by night. Not only was the life another life, but it was richer in numbers and in romance; it was richer in dangers too; and to Tarzan of the Apes danger was the spice of life. And the noises of the jungle night—the roar of the lion, the scream of the leopard, the hideous laughter of Dango the hyena—were music to the ears of the ape-man. The soft padding of unseen feet, the rustling of leaves and grasses to the passage of fierce beasts, the sheen of opalescent eyes flaming through the dark, the million sounds which proclaimed the teeming life that one might hear and scent though seldom see—these constituted the appeal of the nocturnal jungle to Tarzan.

To-night he had swung a wide circle

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—first toward the east and then toward the south, and now he was rounding back again into the north. His eyes, his ears and his keen nostrils were ever on the alert. Mingled with the sounds he knew, there came to him strange sounds —weird sounds which he never heard until after Kudu had sought his lair below the far edge of the big water, sounds which belonged to Goro the Moon and to the mysterious period of Goro's supremacy.

These sounds often caused Tarzan profound speculation. They baffled him because he thought he knew his jungle so well that there could be nothing within it unfamiliar to him. Sometimes he thought that as colors and forms appeared to differ by night from their familiar daylight aspects, so sounds altered with the passage of Kudu and the coming of Goro, and these thoughts roused within his brain a vague conjecture that perhaps Goro and Kudu influenced these changes. And what more natural that eventually he came to attribute to the Sun and the Moon personalities as real as his own? The Sun was a living creature and ruled the day. The Moon, endowed with brains and miraculous powers, ruled the night. Thus functioned the untrained man-mind groping through the dark night of ignorance for an explanation of the things he could not touch or smell or hear, and of the great, unknown powers of nature which he could not see.

AS Tarzan swung north again upon his wide circle, the scent of the *gomangani* came to his nostrils, mixed with the acrid odor of wood-smoke. The ape-man moved quickly in the direction from which the scent was borne down to him upon the gentle night-wind. Presently the ruddy sheen of a great fire filtered through the foliage ahead, and when Tarzan came to a halt in the trees near it, he saw a party of half a dozen black warriors huddled close to the blaze. It was evidently a hunting party, from the village of Mbonga the chief, caught out in the jungle after dark. In a rude circle about them they had constructed a thorn *boma* which, with the aid of the fire, they apparently hoped would discourage the advances of the larger carnivora.

That hope was not conviction was evidenced by the very palpable terror in which they crouched, wide-eyed and trembling, for already Numa and Sabor were moaning through the jungle toward them. There were other creatures too in the shadows beyond the firelight. Tarzan could see their yellow eyes flaming there. The blacks saw them too, and shivered. Then one arose and grasping a burning branch from the fire, hurled it at the eyes, which immediately disappeared. The black sat down again. Tarzan watched and saw that it was several minutes before the eyes commenced to reappear in twos and fours.

Then came Numa the lion and Sabor his mate. The other eyes scattered to right and left before the menacing growls of the great cats, and then the huge orbs of the man-eaters flamed alone out of the darkness. Some of the blacks threw themselves upon their faces and moaned; but he who had before hurled the burning branch now hurled another straight at the faces of the hungry lions; and they too disappeared.

Tarzan was much interested. He saw a new reason for the nightly fires maintained by the blacks—a reason in addition to those connected with warmth and light and cooking. The beasts of the jungle feared fire, and so fire was, in a measure, a protection from them. Tarzan himself knew a certain awe of fire. Once he had, in investigating an abandoned fire in the village of the blacks, picked up a live coal. Since then he had maintained a respectful distance from such fires as he had seen.

For a few minutes after the black hurled the firebrand, no eyes appeared, though Tarzan could hear the soft padding of feet all about him. Then flashed once more the twin fire-spots that marked the return of the lord of the jungle, and a moment later, upon a slightly lower level, there appeared those of Sabor his mate.

FOR some time the lions remained fixed and unwavering—a constellation of fierce stars in the jungle night;

then the male lion advanced slowly toward the *boma* where all but a single black still crouched in trembling terror. When this lone guardian saw that Numa was again approaching he threw another firebrand, and, as before, Numa retreated and with him Sabor the lioness; but not so far, this time, not for so long. Almost instantly they turned and began circling the *boma,* their eyes almost constantly turned toward the firelight, while low, throaty growls evidenced their increasing displeasure. Beyond the lions glowed the flaming eyes of lesser beasts, until the black jungle was shot all around the black men's camp with little spots of fire.

Again and again the black warrior hurled his puny brands at the two big cats; but Tarzan noticed that Numa paid little or no attention to them after the first few retreats. The ape-man knew by Numa's voice that the lion was hungry and surmised that he had made up his mind to feed upon a *gomangani;* but would he dare a closer approach to the dreaded flames?

Even as the thought was passing in Tarzan's mind, Numa stopped his restless pacing and faced the *boma.* For a moment he stood motionless except for the quick, nervous upcurving of his tail; then he walked deliberately forward, while Sabor moved restlessly to and fro where he had left her. The black man called to his comrades that the lion was coming, but they were too far gone in fear to do more than huddle closer together and moan more loudly than before.

Seizing a blazing branch, the man cast it straight into the face of the lion. There was an angry roar, followed by a swift charge. With a single bound the savage beast cleared the *boma* wall, as with almost equal agility the warrior cleared it upon the opposite side, and chancing the dangers lurking in the darkness, bolted for the nearest tree.

Numa was out of the *boma* almost as soon as he was inside of it; but as he went back over the low thorn wall, he took a screaming negro with him. Dragging his victim along the ground, he walked back toward Sabor the lioness, who joined him, and the two continued into the blackness, their savage growls mingling with the piercing shrieks of the doomed and terrified man.

At a little distance from the blaze the lions halted; then there ensued a short succession of unusually vicious growls and roars, during which the cries and moans of the black man ceased—forever.

Presently Numa reappeared in the firelight. He made a second trip into the *boma,* and the former grisly tragedy was reënacted with another victim.

TARZAN rose and stretched lazily. The entertainment was commencing to bore him. He yawned and turned upon his way toward the clearing where the tribe would be sleeping in the encircling trees.

Yet even when he had found his familiar crotch and curled himself for slumber, he felt no desire to sleep. For a long time he lay awake, thinking and dreaming. He looked up into the heavens and watched the moon and the stars. He wondered what they were, and what power kept them from falling. His was an inquisitive mind. Always had he been full of questions concerning all that passed around him; but there had never been one to answer his questions. In childhood he had wanted to *know;* and denied almost all knowledge, he still, in manhood, was filled with the great, unsatisfied curiosity of a child.

He was never quite content to perceive that things happened; he desired to know why they happened. He wanted to know what made things go. The secret of life interested him immensely. The miracle of death he could not quite fathom. Upon innumerable occasions he had investigated the internal mechanisms of his kills, and once or twice he had opened the chest-cavity of victims in time to see the heart still pumping.

He had learned from experience that a knife thrust through this organ brought immediate death nine times out of ten, while he might stab an antagonist innumerable times in other places without even disabling him. And so he had come to think of the heart—or, as he called it, "the red thing that breathes"—as the seat and origin of life.

The brain and its functionings he did not comprehend at all. That his sense-

perceptions were transmitted to his brain and there translated, classified and labeled was something quite beyond him. He thought that his fingers knew when they touched something, that his eyes knew when they saw, his ears when they heard, his nose when it scented. He considered his throat, epidermis and the hairs of his head as the three principal seats of emotion. When Kala had been slain, a peculiar choking sensation had possessed his throat; contact with Histah the snake imparted an unpleasant sensation to the skin of his whole body; the approach of an enemy made the hairs on his scalp stand erect.

Imagine, if you can, a child filled with the wonders of nature, bursting with queries and surrounded only by beasts of the jungle to whom his questionings were as strange as Sanskrit would have been. If he asked Gunto what made it rain, the big old ape would but gaze at him in dumb astonishment for an instant and then return to his interesting and edifying search for fleas; and when he questioned Mumga —who was very old and should have been very wise, but wasn't—as to the reason for the closing of certain flowers after Kudu had deserted the sky, and the opening of others during the night, he was surprised to discover that Mumga had never noticed these interesting facts, though she could tell to an inch just where the fattest grub-worm should be hiding.

To Tarzan these things were wonders. They appealed to his intellect and to his imagination. He saw the flowers close and open; he saw certain blooms which turned their faces always toward the sun; he saw leaves which moved when there was no breeze; he saw vines crawl like living things up the boles and over the branches of great trees; and to Tarzan of the Apes the flowers and the vines and the trees were living creatures. He often talked to them, as he talked to Goro the Moon and Kudu the Sun, and always was he disappointed that they did not reply. He asked them questions, but they could not answer, though he knew that the whispering of the leaves was the language of the leaves—they talked with one another.

The wind Tarzan attributed to the trees and grasses. He thought that they swayed themselves to and fro, creating the wind. In no other way could he account for this phenomenon. The rain he finally attributed to the stars, the moon and the sun.

TO-NIGHT as Tarzan lay thinking there sprang to his fertile imagination an explanation of the stars and the moon. He became quite excited about it. Taug was sleeping in a near-by crotch. Tarzan swung over beside him.

"Taug!" he cried. Instantly the great bull was awake and bristling, sensing danger from the nocturnal summons. "Look, Taug!" exclaimed Tarzan, pointing toward the stars. "See the eyes of Numa and Sabor, of Sheeta and Dango. They wait around Goro to leap in upon him for their kill. See the eyes and the nose and the mouth of Goro. And the light that shines from his face is the light of the great fire he has built to frighten away Numa and Sabor and Dango and Sheeta.

"All about him are the eyes, Taug—you can see them! But they do not come very close to the fire; there are few eyes close to Goro. They fear the fire! It is the fire that saves Goro from Numa. Do you see them, Taug? Some night Numa will be very hungry and very angry; then he will leap over the thorn-bushes which encircle Goro, and we will have no more light after Kudu seeks his lair; the night will be black with the blackness that comes when Goro is lazy and sleeps late into the night, or when he wanders through the skies by day, forgetting the jungle and its people."

Taug looked stupidly at the heavens and then at Tarzan. A meteor fell, blazing a flaming way through the sky.

"Look!" cried Tarzan. "Goro has thrown a burning branch at Numa."

Taug grumbled. "Numa is down below," he said. "Numa does not hunt above the trees." But he looked curiously and a little fearfully at the bright stars above him, as though he saw them for the first time; and doubtless it was the first time that Taug had ever seen the stars, though they had been in the sky above him every night of his life. To Taug they were as the gorgeous

jungle blooms; he could not eat them; and so he ignored them.

Taug fidgeted and was nervous. For a long time he lay sleepless watching the stars which Tarzan had suggested were the flaming eyes of the beasts of prey surrounding Goro the moon—Goro, by whose light the apes danced to the beating of their earthen drums. If Goro should be eaten by Numa, there could be no more *dum-dums*. Taug was overwhelmed by the thought. He glanced at Tarzan half fearfully. Why was his friend so different from the others of the tribe? No one else whom Taug had ever known had had such queer thoughts as Tarzan. The ape scratched his head and wondered, dimly, if Tarzan was a safe companion, and then he recalled, slowly and by a laborious mental process, that Tarzan had served him better than any other of the apes.

Tarzan it was who had freed him from the blacks at the very time that Taug had thought Tarzan wanted Teeka. It was Tarzan who had saved Taug's little *balu* from death. It was Tarzan who had conceived and carried out the plan to pursue Teeka's abductor and rescue the stolen one. Tarzan had fought and bled in Taug's service so many times that Taug, although only a brutal ape, had had impressed upon his mind a fierce loyalty which nothing could now swerve; his friendship for Tarzan had become a habit, a tradition almost, which would endure while Taug endured. Taug never showed any outward demonstration of affection; he growled at Tarzan as he growled at the other bulls who came too close while he was feeding; but he would have died for Tarzan. He knew it and Tarzan knew it; but of such things apes do not speak—their vocabulary, for the finer instincts, consisting more of acts than words. But now Taug was worried, and he fell asleep again still thinking of the strange words of his fellow.

NEXT day Taug thought of them again, and without any intention of disloyalty, he mentioned to Gunto what Tarzan had suggested about the eyes surrounding Goro, and the possibility that sooner or later Numa would charge the moon and devour him. To the apes all large things in nature are male; and so, Goro being the largest creature in the heavens by night, was to them a bull.

Gunto bit a sliver from a horny finger and recalled the fact that Tarzan had once said that the trees talked to one another, and Gozan recounted having seen the ape-man dancing alone in the moonlight with Sheeta the panther. They did not know that Tarzan had roped the savage beast and tied him to a tree before he came to earth and leaped about before the rearing cat, to tantalize him.

Others told of seeing Tarzan ride upon the back of Tantor the elephant, of his bringing the black boy Tibo to the tribe, and of mysterious things with which he communed in the strange lair by the sea. They had never understood his books, and after he had shown them to one or two of the tribe and discovered that even the pictures carried no impression to their brains, he had desisted.

"Tarzan is not an ape," said Gunto. "He will bring Numa to eat us, as he is bringing him to eat Goro. We should kill him."

Immediately Taug bristled. Kill Tarzan! "First you will kill Taug," he said, and lumbered away to search for food.

But others joined the plotters. They thought of many things which Tarzan had done—things which apes did not do and could not understand. Again Gunto voiced the opinion that this white ape should be slain; and the others, filled with terror about the stories they had heard and thinking Tarzan was planning to slay Goro, greeted the proposal with growls of accord.

Among them was Teeka, listening with all her ears; but her voice was not raised in furtherance of the plan. Instead she bristled, showing her fangs; and afterward she went away in search of Tarzan; but she could not find him, as he was roaming far afield in search of meat. She found Taug, though, and told him what the others were planning, and the great bull stamped upon the ground and roared. His bloodshot eyes blazed with wrath; his upper lip curled

up to expose his fighting fangs, and the hair upon his spine stood erect—and then a rodent scurried across the open, and Taug sprang to seize it. In an instant he seemed to have forgotten his rage against the enemies of his friend; but such is the mind of an ape.

SEVERAL miles away, Tarzan of the Apes lolled upon the broad head of Tantor the elephant. He scratched beneath the great ears with the point of a sharp stick, and he talked to the huge pachyderm of everything which filled his black-thatched head. Little or nothing of what he said did Tantor understand; but Tantor is a good listener. Swaying from side to side, he stood there enjoying the companionship of his friend, the friend he loved, and absorbing the delicious sensations of the scratching.

Numa the lion caught the scent of man and warily stalked it until he came within sight of his prey upon the head of the mighty tusker; then he turned, growling and muttering, away in search of more propitious hunting-grounds.

The elephant caught the scent of the lion, borne to him by an eddying breeze, and lifting his trunk, trumpeted loudly. Tarzan stretched back luxuriously.

"Tantor," he said, "it is good to be alive. It is good to lie in the cool shadows. It is good to look upon the green trees and the bright colors of the flowers—upon everything which Bulamutumumo has put here for us. He is very good to us, Tantor: He has given you tender leaves and bark and rich grasses to eat; to me He has given Bara and Horta and Pisah, the fruits and the nuts and the roots. He provides for each the food that each likes best. All that He asks is that we be strong enough or cunning enough to go forth and take it. Yes, Tantor, it is good to live. I should hate to die."

Tantor made a little sound in his throat and curled his trunk upward, that he might caress the ape-man's cheek with the finger at its tip.

"Tantor," said Tarzan presently, "turn and feed in the direction of the tribe of Kerchak the great ape, that Tarzan may ride home upon your head without walking."

The tusker turned and moved slowly off along a broad, tree-arched trail, pausing occasionally to pluck a tender branch or strip the edible bark from an adjacent tree. Tarzan sprawled face downward upon the beast's head and back, his legs hanging down on either side, his head supported by his open palms, his elbows resting on the broad cranium.

JUST before they arrived at the clearing from the north, there reached it from the south another figure—that of a well-knit black warrior who stepped cautiously through the jungle, every sense upon the alert against the many dangers which might lurk anywhere along the way. Yet he passed beneath the southernmost sentry that was posted in a great tree commanding the trail from the south. The ape permitted the *gomangani* to pass unmolested, for he saw that he was alone; but the moment that the warrior had entered the clearing, a loud "Kreeg-ah!" rang out from behind him, immediately followed by a chorus of replies from different directions, as the great bulls crashed through the trees in answer to the summons of their fellow.

The black man halted at the first cry and looked about him. He could see nothing, but he knew the voice of the hairy tree-men whom he and his kind feared, not alone because of the strength and ferocity of the savage beings, but also through a superstitious terror engendered by the manlike appearance of the apes.

But Bulabantu was no coward. He heard the apes all about him; he knew that escape was probably impossible, and so he stood his ground, his spear ready in his hand and a war-cry trembling on his lips.

Tarzan and Tantor were but a short distance away when the first cry of the sentry rang out through the quiet jungle. Like a flash the ape-man leaped from the elephant's back to a near-by tree and was swinging rapidly in the direction of the clearing before the echoes of the first "Kreeg-ah!" had died away. When he arrived, he saw a dozen bulls circling a single *gomangani*. With a blood-curdling scream, Tarzan sprang

to the attack. He hated the blacks even more than did the apes, and here was an opportunity for a kill in the open. What had the *gomangani* done? Had he slain one of the tribe?

Tarzan asked the nearest ape. No, the *gomangani* had harmed none. Gozan, being on watch, had seen him coming through the forest and had warned the tribe—that was all. The ape-man pushed through the circle of bulls, none of which had as yet worked himself into sufficient frenzy for a charge, and came where he had a full and close view of the black. He recognized the man instantly. Only the night before he had seen him facing the eyes in the dark while his fellows grovcled in the dirt at his feet, too terrified even to defend themselves. Here was a brave man, and Tarzan had deep admiration for bravery. Even his hatred of the blacks was not so strong a passion as his love for courage; moreover there was inherent in Tarzan's every fiber that English love of fair play which is so marked a characteristic of the British upper classes. He would have joyed in battling with a black warrior at almost any time; but this one he did not wish to kill; he felt, vaguely, that the man had earned his life by his brave defense of it on the preceding night; nor did he fancy the odds against the lone warrior.

He turned to the apes. "Go back to your feeding," he said, "and let this *gomangani* go his way in peace. He has not harmed us, and last night I saw him fighting Numa and Sabor with fire, alone in the jungle. He is brave. Why should we kill one who is brave and who has not attacked us? Let him go."

The apes growled. They were displeased. "Kill the *gomangani!*" cried one.

"Yes," roared another, "kill the *gomangani* and the *tarmangani* as well."

"Kill the white ape," screamed Gozan. "He is no ape at all, but a *gomangani* with his skin off."

"Kill Tarzan," bellowed Gunto. "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

THE bulls were now indeed working themselves into the frenzy of slaughter, but against Tarzan rather than the black man. A shaggy form charged through them, hurling to one side those with whom it came in contact, as a strong man might scatter children. It was Taug—great, savage Taug.

"Who says 'Kill Tarzan?'" he demanded. "Who kills Tarzan must kill Taug, too. Who can kill Taug? Taug will tear your insides from you and feed them to Dango."

"We can kill you all," replied Gunto. "There are many of us and few of you." And he was right. Tarzan knew that he was right, and Taug knew it; but neither would admit such a possibility. It is not the way of bull apes.

"I am Tarzan," cried the ape-man. "I am Tarzan, mighty hunter, mighty fighter. In all the jungle none so great as Tarzan."

Then, one by one, the opposing bulls recounted their virtues and their prowess. And all the time the combatants came closer and closer to one another. Thus do the bulls work themselves to the proper pitch before engaging in battle.

Gunto came, stiff-legged, close to Tarzan and sniffed at him with bared fangs. Tarzan rumbled forth a low, menacing growl. They might repeat these tactics a dozen times; but sooner or later one bull would close with another, and then the whole hideous pack would be tearing and rending at their prey.

Bulabantu, the black man, had stood wide-eyed in wonder from the moment he had seen Tarzan approaching through the apes. He had heard much of this devil-god that ran with the hairy tree-people; but never before had he seen him in full daylight. He knew him well enough, from the description of those who had seen him and from the glimpses he had had of the marauder upon several occasions when the ape-man had entered the village of Mbonga the chief, by night, in the perpetration of his numerous ghastly jokes.

Bulabantu could not, of course, understand anything which passed between Tarzan and the apes; but he saw that the ape-man and one of the larger bulls were in argument with the others. He saw that these two were standing with

their backs toward him and between him and the balance of the tribe, and he guessed, though it seemed improbable, that they might be defending him. He knew that Tarzan had once spared the life of Mbonga the chief and that he had succored Tibo and Tibo's mother, Momaya. So it was not impossible that he would help Bulabantu; but how he could accomplish it Bulabantu could not guess; nor as a matter of fact could Tarzan, for the odds against him were too great.

GUNTO and the others were slowly forcing Tarzan and Taug back toward Bulabantu. The ape-man thought of his words with Tantor just a short time before: "Yes, Tantor, it is good to live. I should hate to die." And now he knew that he was about to die, for the temper of the great bulls was mounting rapidly against him. Always had many of them hated him, and all were suspicious of him. They knew he was different. Tarzan knew it too; but he was glad that he was—he was a *man;* that he had learned from his picture books, and he was very proud of the distinction. Presently, though, he would be a dead man.

Gunto was preparing to charge. Tarzan knew the signs. He knew that the rest of the bulls would charge with Gunto. Then it would soon be over. . . . . Something moved among the verdure at the opposite side of the clearing. Tarzan saw it just as Gunto, with the terrifying cry of a challenging ape, sprang forward. Tarzan voiced a peculiar call and then crouched to meet the assault. Taug crouched too, and Bulabantu, assured now that these two were fighting upon his side, couched his spear and sprang between them to receive the first charge of the enemy.

Simultaneously a huge bulk broke into the clearing from the jungle behind the charging bulls. The trumpeting of a mad tusker rose shrill above the cries of the anthropoids, as Tantor the elephant dashed swiftly across the clearing to the aid of his friend.

Gunto never closed upon the ape-man; nor did a fang enter flesh upon either side. The terrifying reverberation of Tantor's challenge sent the bulls scurrying to the trees, jabbering and scolding. Taug raced off with them. Only Tarzan and Bulabantu remained. The latter stood his ground, because he saw that the devil-god did not run, and because the black had the courage to face certain death beside one who had quite evidently dared death for him.

But it was a surprised *gomangani* who saw the mighty elephant come to a sudden halt in front of the ape-man and caress him with a long, sinuous trunk.

Tarzan turned toward the black man. "Go!" he said in the language of the apes, and pointed in the direction of the village of Mbonga. Bulabantu understood the gesture if not the word; nor did he lose time in obeying. Tarzan stood watching him until he had disappeared. He knew that the apes would not follow. Then he said to the elephant, "Pick me up!" and the tusker swung him lightly to his head.

"Tarzan goes to his lair by the big water," shouted the ape-man to the apes in the trees. "All of you are more foolish than Manu, except Taug and Teeka. Taug and Teeka may come to see Tarzan; but the others must keep away. Tarzan is done with the tribe of Kerchak."

He prodded Tantor with a calloused toe, and the big beast swung off across the clearing, the apes watching them until they were swallowed up by the jungle.

Before the night fell, Taug killed Gunto, picking a quarrel with him over his attack upon Tarzan.

FOR a moon the Tribe saw nothing of Tarzan of the Apes. Many of them probably never gave him a thought; but there were those who missed him, more than Tarzan imagined. Taug and Teeka often wished that he was back, and Taug determined a dozen times to go and visit Tarzan in his seaside lair; but first one thing and then another interfered.

One night when Taug lay sleepless looking up at the starry heavens, he recalled the strange things that Tarzan once had suggested to him—that the bright spots were the eyes of the meat-eaters waiting in the dark of the jungle sky to leap upon Goro the Moon and

devour him. The more he thought about this matter, the more perturbed he became.

And then a strange thing happened. Even as Taug looked at Goro, he saw a portion of one edge disappear, precisely as though something were gnawing upon it. Larger and larger became the hole in the side of Goro. With a scream Taug leaped to his feet. His frenzied cries brought the terrified tribe screaming and chattering toward him.

"Look!" cried Taug, pointing at the moon. "Look! It is as Tarzan said. Numa has sprung through the fires and is devouring Goro. You called Tarzan names and drove him from the tribe; now see how wise he was! Let one of you who hated Tarzan go to Goro's aid. See the eyes in the dark jungle all about Goro. He is in danger, and none can help him—none except Tarzan. Soon Goro will be devoured by Numa, and we shall have no more light after Kudu seeks his lair. How shall we dance the *dum-dum* without the light of Goro?"

The apes trembled and whimpered. Any manifestation of the powers of nature always filled them with terror, for they could not understand.

"Go and bring Tarzan," cried one, and then resounded cries of "Tarzan!" "Bring Tarzan!" "He will save Goro." But who was to travel the dark jungle by night to fetch him?

"I will go," volunteered Taug, and an instant later he was off.

And as the tribe waited, they watched the slow devouring of the moon. Already Numa had eaten out a great semicircular piece. At that rate Goro would be entirely gone before Kudu came again. The apes trembled at the thought of perpetual darkness by night. They could not sleep. Restlessly they moved here and there among the branches of trees, watching Numa of the skies at his deadly feast, and listening for the coming of Taug with Tarzan.

GORO was nearly gone when the apes heard the sounds of the approach through the trees of the two they awaited, and presently Tarzan, followed by Taug, swung into a near-by tree.

The ape-man wasted no time in idle words. In his hand was his long bow, and at his back hung a quiver full of arrows, poisoned arrows that he had stolen from the village of the blacks, just as he had stolen the bow. Up into a great tree he clambered, higher and higher until he stood swaying upon a small limb which bent low beneath his weight. Here he had a clear and unobstructed view of the heavens. He saw Goro and the inroads which the hungry Numa had made into his shining surface.

Raising his face to the moon, Tarzan shrilled forth his hideous challenge. Faintly and from afar came the roar of an answering lion. The apes shivered. Numa of the skies had answered Tarzan.

Then the ape-man fitted an arrow to his bow, and drawing the shaft far back, aimed its point at the heart of Numa where he lay in the heavens devouring Goro. There was a loud twang as the released bolt shot into the dark heavens. Again and again Tarzan of the Apes launched his arrows at Numa, and all the while the apes of the tribe of Kerchak huddled in terror.

At last came a cry from Taug. "Look! Look!" he screamed. "Numa is killed. Tarzan has killed Numa. See! Goro is emerging from the belly of Numa." And sure enough, the moon was gradually emerging from whatever had devoured her, whether it was Numa the lion or the shadow of the earth; but were you to try to convince an ape of the tribe of Kerchak that it was aught but Numa which so nearly devoured Goro that night, or that another than Tarzan preserved the brilliant god of their savage and mysterious rites from a frightful death, you would have difficulty—and a fight on your hands.

And so Tarzan of the Apes came back to the tribe of Kerchak, and in his coming he took a long stride toward the kingship which he ultimately won; for now the apes looked up to him as a superior being. In all the tribe there was but one who was at all skeptical about the plausibility of Tarzan's remarkable rescue of Goro, and that one, strange as it may seem, was Tarzan of the Apes.

As Barnum Said—

by C. P. Connolly

BUSINESS was dull in their respective lines, and the lawyer and the real-estate man were discussing present times and future prospects as they sat at late breakfast in a fashionable restaurant in a Rocky Mountain city. The wives of both were on holiday visits out of town. The sun was glimmering crystal-like on the snow-covered streets outside and refracting its rays on the gaudy ormolu finishings of this récherché eating-house which had a reputation in three States.

A year or two before, the lawyer had succeeded in raising a large sum of money in the East on a prospective mine, some of which he had sunk in the mine, but most of which had stuck to his fingers.

"What's the matter with getting an option on a claim and going East and doing some business?" inquired the real-estate man.

"I have exhausted my usefulness in that direction," replied the lawyer. "I have no more friends whose pockets can be tapped by moral suasion alone."

"Well, let's go where you're not known. A sucker is born every minute."

"That's what the jokesmiths used to say. But you'll find it different now, especially in the mining-game. In some respects, men are like hogs: if you don't throw them some corn once in a while, they wont follow you. You know Disraeli said that no English ministry could withstand three bad harvests."

"You're wrong. The suckers are born at the old census-rate. They are wise to the old ways—that's all. It's only a question of putting it over on them a new way. Besides, what's the matter with finding a meritorious proposition. We'll make some of them rich, while we swell our own pockets."

"Nothing doing," replied the lawyer. "You can't sell a meritorious mining proposition in the East. The best of them is a gamble, and the Easterners don't want to gamble—they want a sure thing. The only way to get their money is to get something so barren that you've got to gild it like the dome on the capitol at Washington to make it look good."

"Oh, you're too pessimistic," averred the real-estate man. "We can find a good claim and raise money enough here to open it up, so that we can have a mining engineer's showing before we go East."

"The mining engineers are in bad odor too, just now. You remember the Golden Horn. They gave it a clean bill of health, and it was full of buckstone."

"Well, think it over. I'm going to see

if I can't find something, anyway. This town is rotten dull, and we've either got to toil or—sell mining-stock. Good-by."

IN a week the real-estate man looked up his legal friend. He had discovered a claim. It was the Jennie Lind and was located across the flat, just at the foot of the range. A diamond-driller had given the real-estate man the tip that there was ore in the ground.

"Let's take a lease on it, put up five hundred dollars between us and put a couple of men at work. We may uncover enough to justify a mining engineer's report. I can get Jack Hamilton to make a report for a hundred dollars. It'll be a good one, too. Jack knows the game."

"All right. I'm on."

In forty days there was mild excitement in the region of the Jennie Lind. The leasers had ore fifty feet below the surface—and the mine had cost them nothing but the mental effort of drawing up the lease and bond, and the wages of two men for forty days.

"Now, let's incorporate," said the real-estate man. "If the mine doesn't pan out, we can sell the stock."

Articles of incorporation were accordingly drawn up by the lawyer and filed at the State capital, and a certificate received from the Secretary of State announcing that the Jennie Lind Mining Company was duly incorporated according to the forms of law. There were five hundred thousand shares of stock issued. For these shares of stock the lawyer and the real-estate man transferred to the corporation their interest in the lease and bond, which gave the corporation the proprietorship of the Jennie Lind claim for a period of five years, with the option of purchasing it outright for fifty thousand dollars at any time during the period of the lease.

The board of directors was made up of the lawyer, the real-estate man and two prominent citizens of the town. The two promoters transferred back half of their holdings to the corporation, to be known as treasury-stock, which was to be sold on the market, if necessary, for the development of the property. The two prominent citizens agreed to act as directors in consideration of the issuance to them of twenty-five thousand shares of treasury-stock.

If things turned out as promised, they did not need to sell any treasury-stock; the mine would develop itself. In that case, the treasury-stock would revert to the promoters.

There is no form of business activity in which there are so many ups and downs as the mining game. It was true that the miners at work in the Jennie Lind—now increased to a goodly working force—had discovered as beautiful a body of copper-glance as had been seen for some time in that region; it was five feet wide and broadening at depth. And if the literal truth is to be told, there were some hilarious occasions for a week after this, for the real-estate man, the lawyer and their friends. Suspicious-looking bottles, packed in ice and labeled with the cabalistic words *Sec* and *Mumm,* were cracked nightly, and their contents disappeared down joyous gullets. The dressmakers at one of the department-stores were busy fitting the forms of the wives of the four directors with the latest designs from Paris. And there were other of those evidences of prosperity which can be seen among the initiated when full-fortuned ships are sighted in the offing.

But there's nothing goes up that doesn't come down. The descent may be sudden or it may be gradual, but the laws of gravitation are as certain as the stars in their courses.

ONE day the foreman of the Jennie Lind hastened to the office of the real-estate man. His face and hands were grimy with the mire of machinery, and his swaddled bootlegs seeped and swished with their waterlogged contents. His face was barometric of trouble.

"What's the matter?" inquired the real-estate man. "Anything wrong?"

"Everything. The Johnstown flood has broke loose out there. We're swamped. No engine on earth can handle the water."

"Why, where does it come from?"

"God only knows—we don't. You'd better come out and take a look at it. It's a perfect Niagara every time we strike a pick ten feet below the apex."

The real-estate man lost no time telephoning to his partner.

"Get in your machine," he called, "and let's take a run out to the mine. Dunnigan's here and says that the water's running like a millrace."

"I'll be right over and pick you up."

When they got to the mine, they found confirmation of the truth that however much mining-promoters may be given to exaggeration, miners themselves are not given to overstatements. The drift that had been driven along the course of the vein, thirty feet below the adit-level, would float a miniature merchant marine.

"Ouch!" ejaculated the lawyer when he had gazed for a moment at the flood.

"We're up against it. What're we going to do?"

"First, we must find out where it comes from. We'll run in and see Jack Hamilton. Perhaps he can make a guess."

The mining engineer was found in court. He was discussing blind lodes, croppings and breccia on the witness-stand, under the skillful guidance of a mining lawyer. The promoters of the Jennie Lind patiently waited until he had fully earned his expert-fee under the severe cross-examination of another limb of the law. Then the three started for the submerged mine.

HAMILTON made a careful survey of the situation below-ground. He inquired and found that the volume of water had not increased after the first inrush. With a hammer he tapped the hanging wall gently above the water-level where the miners had been gouging the vein. There was a hollow sound. He ordered the miners to bring their drills and picks and pierce the wall. The rock fell away under their labors, leaving a hole through which a man could put his head. The rock was dry, and the water had ceased to flow. Hamilton stuck his head through the opening. He withdrew it in a moment with an astonished expression.

"You're just over an underground river," he said. "You can pull down this wall and make a subterranean summer-garden of the place. You can string electric lights along the river and charge two bits for a sail. You have the Mammoth Cave beaten to a frazzle. This is no River of Doubt. Stick your head through there."

The two promoters stuck their heads successively through the opening and withdrew them in amazement.

"I congratulate you. You have a fortune," joshed Hamilton.

"We would have, if we had the population and didn't have eleven months of winter in this infernal climate," said the real-estate man disgustedly. "You may be a good mining engineer, Jack, but you're not a P. T. Barnum."

"What's the matter," suggested the lawyer, "with letting the hanging wall stand as a protection against the water? We don't mine that, anyway. We have enough ore here to make us all rich if we strip only half the vein."

"Fine," replied Hamilton, "if your vein were a perpendicular one; but unfortunately it has a dip of forty-five degrees, and fifty feet down you'll find it over about the middle of that river. The chances are that if you run far enough into the ground on the foot-wall side of your vein you'll find either another river or another fork of this one. You see, this gulch used to be a river-bottom, and when the mountain-slides came in the course of centuries, the water found a fresh channel and has been flowing on ever since underground. Your vein is probably part of a subterranean delta."

There was only one thing to do. They closed down the mine temporarily and decided to have a conference at the lawyer's office next day.

The upshot of this conference was that after many tentative suggestions the partners decided that their luck was the luck of the game and they would make the best of it. They calked up the openings as best they could, to prevent the inrush of free water, and by Herculean efforts pumped the sump fairly dry. Then they completed the work of calking the openings, packed them with brush and barricaded them with a sort of rough concrete. Against this they banked the waste, left the vein in an apparently natural condition and pumped it completely dry. It took a week, and they intrusted the work to only a few

men on whose discretion they could rely.

TWO weeks later the lawyer and the real-estate man boarded an eastbound transcontinental train. Their departure from their home town was unheralded and their destination known only to themselves and to a select coterie of acquaintances. In course of time they detrained at Pittsburgh and repaired to a prominent hotel.

Times were dull here in some lines, as in the West, and they spent some anxious days in an endeavor to make connections with the financial magnates of the city. They were anxious to put the saddle on the right horse. But there was nothing doing, and their funds were now running low. In desperation they discussed the feasibility of advertising for investors through the columns of the local newspapers, but finally they dismissed this as too small for the kind of game they had decided to play.

Late one night, as they sat rather disconsolately in the dining-room of the hotel, eating a lunch and listening to the strains of an orchestra, their eyes were gladdened by the sight of a man from home who came in with the theater stream and who, piloted by the head waiter, was passing their table. The real-estate man nudged the stranger's arm.

"Hello, boys!" said the stranger. "When did you come in?"

"Oh, we've been here two weeks. Sit down. Mighty glad to see some one from home. Have a bite with us."

The real-estate man was the talkative end of the combination, and now, with a side-glance at his partner, he began to unfold to the newcomer the purpose of their visit East, or at least a part of it. The friend listened patiently and interestedly, the while he put away with relishing gusto mouthfuls of pâté de foie gras.

"By Jove, I'm glad you mentioned it," he said finally. "I happen to know Jones & Monberg, the biggest financial concern in this town. They take flyers in oil, copper or anything that comes along. They're particularly partial to copper. You know of them?"

"Sure," replied the real-estate man. "We've been trying for a week to connect with them."

"I'll go around there to-morrow morning, and if the coast looks good, I'll introduce the subject of your presence in town and give you a send-off."

This sounded so good that the real-estate man ordered a bottle of wine.

NEXT morning the two partners met their friend in the hotel lobby. He told them that Monberg was out of town, but that Jones, his partner, would be glad to see them the following morning. The friend from home wrote out a brief note of introduction to the firm on the back of his business card.

At the appointed time the two partners betook themselves to the sumptuous offices of Jones & Monberg in the Chamber of Commerce Building. The offices took up two floors. The two visitors made note of the fact that, according to the plaque which ornamented the wall on the right of the main entrance, there was an oil-department, a mining-department, a real-estate-department and various other departments. The plaque also informed them that Mr. Jones' room was 220. They made their way gropingly until they found the number.

Mr. Jones was much more democratic than they had expected to find him. Evidently their Western friend was more than persona grata in this financial emporium.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" inquired Jones, after a preliminary exchange of courtesies and some running comments on the West.

"Well, to come briefly to the point, we're looking for large capital. We have an immense showing of copper-ore, and we're anxious to secure large capital to develop it. We're willing to make generous terms with the right parties."

"Have you any ore blocked out?" tentatively inquired Jones.

"A vein eight feet wide and a hundred feet long."

"Why, then, do you need capital?"

"That's the point we're coming to. We've closed down the property and given out the impression that the mine

is worthless. You see, it is in a new section, and there are a large number of undeveloped claims around us. If it should become known that we had paying ore in such quantities, the prices of those adjoining properties would go up like rockets. We want to get hold of them before we strike another pick. We've already tried to get options on some of these properties through other parties, but they're held for cash. Even now, there's an impression among the owners of some of these claims that we're bluffing and that we have any quantity of ore. That was why we closed down the mine."

"But how do you know these adjoining properties have ore?"

"We don't. We're gambling on that. But we do know that the adjoining claims north and south of us have ore, because our vein is strong and well-defined and can be traced into those properties. A body of ore eight or ten feet wide doesn't cut off, ordinarily; it travels; and we want to follow it on both its ends."

"How much money will you need?"

"At least two hundred thousand dollars—perhaps three hundred thousand dollars. For that we are willing to transfer two hundred and twenty-five thousand shares of treasury-stock out of five hundred thousand shares."

"We wouldn't touch anything without a controlling interest," suggested Jones. He rang a bell. A boy appeared.

"Tell Mr. Martin to step here."

Mr. Martin came in. He was introduced as Jones & Monberg's mining expert. The situation was briefly explained to the expert by Jones.

"But, Mr. Jones, we can't go into anything new just now. We're already in more mining ventures than we can look after comfortably. We're putting up five thousand dollars a month on that proposition out in Colorado, and I haven't even had time to go out and look at it yet. I'm on my way to Mangum's now to talk over a mining proposition, and I'm half an hour late."

The mining expert therefore excused himself. Jones, no less than his visitors, seemed disappointed. Perhaps he was anxious that his firm should get a foothold in this new field; perhaps he was anxious to do something to show his faith in his Western friend. In any event, after twirling the hank of his eyeglasses around his diamond-decked fingers a turn or two, he said:

"I'll talk it over with Martin. Monberg will be back to-morrow. Come in the day after. I think we can fix it up."

THE lawyer and the real-estate man spent the next forty-eight hours in high feather. They took in the theaters. They hired an automobile and rode about the suburbs. In short, they played the rôle of fortune's favorites.

On the second day they returned to the offices of Jones & Monberg. They were cordially received. Mr. Monberg was fully apprised of the situation as explained to him by his partner. But he was more chary.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said after a lengthy discussion. "You give us an option on two hundred and fifty-five thousand shares of stock for ninety days, at the lump price of two hundred thousand dollars, and we'll send our mining engineer out to the mine to look into it. If it looks good to us, we'll furnish the money to put in some brand-new machinery and fully equip the mine with a good shaft-house and other accessories, and exercise our option of purchase. We'll take a chance of buying up the other properties around there later."

The two partners did not fall for this proposition with any precipitate haste. It wasn't quite what they wanted. Besides, they knew that one of the rules of the game was that no matter how good a proposition was, it was always policy to raise the ante. They held out for three hundred thousand dollars. It was finally agreed to compromise by splitting the difference.

Two days later Jones & Monberg's mining expert started for the West. The lawyer and the real-estate man said they had some business in New York which would require their presence there for several days. They gave the mining engineer a letter of introduction to Dunnigan, telling him to place every facility for an examination of the property at the disposal of the expert, and to see that he was hospitably cared for. By

the same mail they also wrote privately to the foreman.

The days went by. The lawyer and the real-estate man did not spend as much time in New York as they had anticipated. They returned quietly to Pittsburgh and circulated among some of the lesser financial lights whose interest they had sought to arouse before the advent of their Western friend and their meeting with Jones & Monberg. They took occasion in the most casual manner to announce that the great firm of promoters had become interested to the extent of sending a mining man West to inspect the property.

There is no regret more poignant in the ordinary affairs of life than that of the man who has been handed a prize-package on a silver platter and who has turned it down on the mistaken theory that he was going to be stung, only to see some one else grab it and draw a prize. There was, therefore, general regret among the belated contingent, and great curiosity as to what Jones & Monberg might do about the Jennie Lind.

FINALLY the report from the West arrived in the person of the mining expert himself. Not only was he favorable—he was enthusiastic. The mine was located in a great copper region. The ore was in sight in the Jennie Lind. It ran from fifteen to fifty per cent copper. It was blocked out, practically ready to hoist. There was a smelter within a half-mile. In short, the conditions at the Jennie Lind could not be better if they had been made to order. Without the explanation which the promoters gave, it was difficult to understand why they should make such a gift to the firm. The report was so good that Jones & Monberg voluntarily offered to advance ten thousand dollars on the purchase price of the stock.

There was no longer any reason for the real-estate man and his partner to linger in the East. They could go home with the assurance that Jones & Monberg's expert would again go West within a month and take charge of the property. But they did not leave town without letting the backward ones who had turned them down during their first days in Pittsburgh into the secret of developments. The belated ones now begged them for a chance to buy in. The real-estate man and his friend faithfully promised them that if there was any chance of securing any stock they would have it forwarded to a certain bucket-shop which the anxious would-be investors mentioned. There might be some stockholders who could be induced to part with a portion of their shares for a reasonable amount of cash. People in mining communities were usually hard up. Besides, there would be a rush to get ready money to buy up claims in the neighborhood of the Jennie Lind.

THE two promoters departed for the West. Within ten days the stock of the Jennie Lind began to flow eastward —at first in small lots, then in constantly increasing volume. It sold at a dollar, a dollar and a half, two dollars a share. It looked as if every old stocking in Pittsburgh was disgorging its hoardings. There was no suspicion that the stock was coming in an unusual flood—there are no suspicions in the mind of the man who is convinced that he is in on the ground floor, and that all the rest of the world is missing a good thing.

It is a good deal longer story than this, but there's no need of wasting time over further details. We might as well clean up the platter at one swoop. Jones & Monberg did not spend any very large amount of money in developing the Jennie Lind. They were not long in discovering the underground river—as much to the apparent amazement of the lawyer and his real-estate friend as to that of their own genuine surprise and regret. They did not take up their option on the two hundred and fifty-five thousand shares of stock. They were out something less than thirteen thousand dollars, and thankful that it was no more. The real losses were distributed among those who had first rejected, then nibbled at and finally gorged themselves at this Barmecide feast. The stream of time, in which so many more precious things had been submerged, left floating in their memories the golden vignette on the bright green stock certificates of the Jennie Lind Mining Company. They had value received, if not in coin of the realm.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

Overheard in Germany

by Clarence Herbert New

AS the White House is the center of Washington, so the King's Palace is the center of Munich—a Bavarian city of six hundred thousand people twenty-five miles north of the Tyrolean Alps. Northwest from the Palace lies the artists' quarter, with the famous Pinakotheks and the Glyptothek. North and northeast are the Hofgarten, the University quarter and the English park. Along the east side runs the river Isar, a tributary of the Danube. Directly south lies the twisting maze of narrow streets and arches which was old Munich. Still further south, beyond the city, the Isar comes down through a narrow gorge with precipitous banks; and higher, ever higher, are the forests of Grünwald and other preserves, stretching into the foothills of the Alps.

Running west from the Marienplatz in the old city, is the Kaufingerstrasse, lined on one side with more or less modern commercial buildings—one of which is the substantial four-story headquarters of the Deutsches Reichspressbund in Bavaria. On the top floor, in the rear, are offices occupied by the managing director and his assistant managers—the director's private office being equipped with sound-proof walls, floor, windows and chimney, and protected by an electric alarm system, installed by him personally, which upon more than one occasion had warned him of attempts at espionage.

The director—Herr Paulus Obermeyer—was a well-built man in the forties—a graduate of Munich University and for two different terms a Socialist member of the Reichstag, though his earlier years had been spent in the United States, his parents having gone to New York when he was three years old. A few journalistic feats in that city had won him a position with the United Press as European correspondent—from which berth it was natural enough that he should drift into the great German news syndicate, the Deutsches Reichspressbund. All these data and considerably more, in reference to him, were on file among the secret-service archives of the Bavarian government—being, of course, at the disposal of the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin. It seemingly vouched for Herr Paulus Obermeyer so thoroughly that to suspect him of any possible dealings with the enemies of Germany was about as farcical as to suspect Kronprinz Rupprecht himself.

BUT the great Deutsches Reichspressbund—which every German supposes to be one of the most thoroughly Teutonic organizations in all the Fatherland—isn't really German at all. It is the outcome of an idea which occurred several years ago to the famous and mysterious Diplomatic Free Lance of England, a man whose identity is still only known to a dozen or so of his family and intimate friends. Knowing the unsuspected channels by which every great newspaper manages to obtain private information in spite of every effort to withhold it, he first built up the International Press Confederation as a

secret feeder to Downing Street. Then, one after another, smaller news-syndicates upon the Continent were absorbed by it—their former employees replaced by English, Scots, Canadians or Australians who had been tried and found trustworthy, and who were qualified by their knowledge of languages to appear as native citizens of the Teutonic countries.

Herr Paulus Obermeyer, for example, was born Sandy McGregor, of Edinburgh—was educated at that University and took a postgraduate course at Munich, after which he went to New York and put in a few years as reporter on *The New York Sun*. Because of his linguistic accomplishments, the United Press sent him to see if he couldn't dig out certain political information in Berlin and Rome. In Naples, he was introduced to the famous Lord Trevor of Dartmoor, and subsequently invited to lunch aboard His Lordship's equally famous yacht the *Ranee Sylvia*. From that time, McGregor had never seen His Lordship but twice, to his knowledge—never suspected him to be other than the celebrated aviator and sport-loving English peer that everyone supposed him to be. But, returning through London, Sandy was introduced to the British manager of the International Press Confederation and offered the position at Munich at a very attractive salary—after he had willingly taken a fresh oath of allegiance to the British Crown and been told of the semipolitical nature of his future work.

THIS should place with sufficient clearness in the reader's mind Herr Paulus Obermeyer—as he sat at his desk about five o'clock one afternoon when a tastefully dressed woman was shown into his private office. She had been pointed out to him at the Hof Theater as the Fräulein von Kessel—a rather fascinating young woman, visiting in Munich with a widowed aunt and being an occasional guest at well-known houses in the vicinity; but he recognized her as a woman of title in Prussia. Glancing at her card, he rose and placed a chair near his desk.

"Fräulein," he said, "this is a pleasant surprise! One of our mutual friends told me who you were, the other night—and our reporters have brought in social items concerning you, of course. But I have said nothing of the *Gräfin* von Kessel, who is so popular in Potsdam and Berlin. If the Gräfin wishes to be incognito in Munich, there is no journalistic reason I know of for betraying her identity."

Now, the Fräulein had called with the idea of pumping the Herr Direktor upon certain subjects. She didn't suspect him, personally, of anything more treasonable than pretty radical socialism, but certain men who called upon him, she had suspected—until they confounded her with what seemed incontestable proof that they were personages of considerably more authority in the Imperial service than she herself. In spite of this, however, some instinct warned her that there might be something about them which would bear watching. The Herr Direktor she had supposed one of the rather obvious sort occupying such a position. His quiet humor in admitting what he knew about her put him in a different class altogether—a class which she knew better than to fool with beyond a certain point. Her manner changed gracefully to one of the utmost apparent frankness.

"Your consideration is thoroughly appreciated, Herr Obermeyer; I trust I may count upon it even if you happen to learn other things about me at some future time. My reason for calling this afternoon is to obtain a few scraps of information which I think you are in position to give—if you consider it permissible."

The "Herr Direktor" bowed—from the hips. He had lived in Germany long enough to have unconsciously assumed the superior professional manner in any interview.

"As you probably know," pursued the Gräfin, "I've been a guest of Baron Hoffmeyer for several days at the old Ebeling Schloss in the mountains. Among the other guests were an Irish-American capitalist and politician—the Honorable Aloysius McMurtagh—and a Major Brady, formerly of the Boer army. They have just been in Russia. During a private conference with the Baron and several of his friends they

stated with rather surprising frankness that our propaganda in Russia will ultimately fail to bring about a separate peace—judging from their observations among all classes of the people. Now, when in New York, it was demonstrated to me that you gentlemen of the press manage to obtain information, day by day, which it is frequently impossible for the Government itself to secure; and it occurred to me that, in spite of what your papers print to the contrary, you might be in position to give me a hint as to what the actual conditions are in Russia at this moment?"

OBERMEYER hesitated only an instant: "Er—would you mind telling me, Gräfin, what use you propose to make of such information—supposing it were in my power to give it?"

"Whatever you tell me will be treated as strictly confidential, Herr Direktor. It will confirm an impression in my mind that certain men are exactly what they wish me to believe them—or give grounds for doubt as to whether they may not be working toward some ulterior object of their own."

"You are not quite sure, then, that Mr. McMurtagh and the Major are entirely trustworthy?"

This was pinning her down closer than she had any intention of permitting, and she made haste to escape it.

"On the contrary, *mein Herr!* Their credentials are of the very highest, as I personally know! I see no reason why I should give you names. Either the motive for my request is obvious, or I'm asking for information to which, as a civilian, I'm not entitled—"

"But which, as an agent of the Wilhelmstrasse, it is quite necessary that you should have—eh, Gräfin? You'll remember I told you it was our business to know things which it is obviously necessary to suppress in our publications. There, there! . . . . . You needn't take offense or deny it! We are discreet—as you have seen. In regard to the Russian situation, the uneducated people of Russia might be easily deceived by our propaganda throughout their country, and make a separate peace; but those in power among the *zemstvos* and in the Provisional Government will never permit it. They are not fools, those national and district leaders! And they're looking a long way into the future. For a week or two, I grant you, we had a chance. Today I think that chance has gone by. Sooner or later, they'll fight again—and fight hard! This is the impression two of our men obtained after coming from Vladivostok to Petrograd, and then getting through the lines into Warsaw. They returned yesterday."

THE Gräfin tried a new tack: "You are a Socialist, Herr Direktor—one of those who have been advocating many changes in the constitutional government. Don't you think there is serious danger of creating dissension among ourselves—weakening our military power—by some of the changes you advise? For example—giving the masses more to say as to what shall be done, and what not?"

"On the contrary, Gräfin! Give them a *little* more power, and you keep them quiet. Refuse it—and when they've starved a bit longer, they'll start a tidal wave whose force and volume it is impossible to estimate. Let us recognize the fact that we have an internal menace, and meet it—not go on with our eyes shut and be overwhelmed!"

In a few moments, she thanked him and rose to go. He accompanied her to the door—then closed it and returned to his desk, reaching for a pen to go on with the signing of several letters that her call had interrupted. As he did so, however, he kept glancing at a small dial resembling a clock, on his desk. One of the hands moved around from XII to III—stopped for a second or so—moved back to XII—stopped. He methodically signed fifteen letters—then opened a canvas-bound ledger containing data of the syndicate newspapers in various cities, jotting down memoranda from several on a pad.

For nearly half an hour, he was conscious that his office door had been imperceptibly opened until there was a tiny slit through which the woman had been watching him. Finally she gave it up—and the hand on the little dial moved around from XII to VII, which represented the street door, and its

wavering indicated that she had left the building. Tilting back the cover of a twelve-inch oak box on his desk, the mouth of a small metal horn was revealed. Sitting in his chair, his head was perhaps two and a half feet from the box—but he spoke in a low conversational tone, and the answering voice from the box was as distinct as if the speaker were sitting within three feet of him.

"Did that woman hesitate outside the door, Henry?"

"No sir. . . . . Got into an army car that stood waiting for her in front of Altenheim's, and drove through the Rathaus arch into the Tal."

"Anybody with her?"

"Only General von Bremmer's orderly; it's the machine he puts at her disposal for shopping trips, every day or so."

"Very good! I shall be quite busy for an hour—before I leave for dinner. Don't let anyone come up. If McMurtagh or Major Brady should call, keep them in the lower office until I ring. If they don't come before I go out, you can meet them by accident somewhere and say I'd like to see them here during the evening."

THE curtain of the window behind Obermeyer was halfway up—so that his movements could be seen from the rear windows of houses on the next street by anyone sufficiently interested to look. Putting on his hat, he switched off the lights and apparently left the building. Instead of doing this, however, he picked up a pair of prism-binoculars from a side table and focused them upon an upper window of a building fronting upon the Fürstenfelderstrasse. The blinds were closed, but the shutters of the lower halves were open, apparently for air, as it was a warm evening. Through them he could distinctly see a man in the uniform of a staff colonel, sitting at a flat-topped desk. Presently he put on his helmet and went out—turning off the gas.

During the next half-hour the dignified Herr Direktor did a number of very undignified things. Picking up a bundle containing a dictaphone-receiver, a coil of wire and pliers, he noiselessly crept up a ladder to the roof of his building, and then stepped cautiously over the intervening roofs until he came to a fire-escape connecting the last roof to the corner house on the side street. Crossing this, he stepped along silently on rubber heels until he reached the building where the officer had been at his desk. He managed to get down into the room unobserved—and placed the dictaphone behind a row of books in a sectional case at one side of the room, connecting it behind the bookcase to wires which he had had led down the chimney and under the flooring. After this Obermeyer returned as quietly as he had come.

AN hour later three gentlemen were dining at the Hotel Four Seasons on the Maximilianstrasse when a gentleman in evening clothes came in and sat down at the next table. When the newcomer had proceeded as far as the second course, the carafe—which had gotten shoved too close to the edge—toppled over to the floor, making a big splash. The man pushed back his chair to escape being wet, and laughingly remarked to his neighbors at the next table—in German: "Thought I was going to be soaked when that thing went over!" There was a brief exchange of joking remarks—during which he said to the man nearest him, in a tone so low that nobody else heard it: "Drop in and see the Chief this evening, if possible—something important! *I-P-C.*" In the glance which met his eye but the fraction of a second, he saw that his communication had been understood.

When the three had leisurely finished their dinner and had lighted cigars, they strolled out past the Hof Theater and down to the offices of the Deutsches Reichspressbund. They had come to Berlin with high recommendation from the dreaded Camarilla, which, with the Green Circle, was the center of German intrigue in Petrograd; consequently, the Wilhelmstrasse had provided them with credentials that enabled them to go anywhere in Germany or Austria upon the supposed business of securing coöperation between the Socialists of Germany and those of Russia.

The three were taken up to the top floor and ushered into Herr Paulus Obermeyer's private office—the heavy door being closed behind them. He greeted them civilly, pointed to chairs which had been drawn up close to his desk, switched off the dictaphone and lighted a cigar.

"Gentlemen," Obermeyer said, "you came in here the other day and gave me an impression that you were interested in other things outside of the Russian situation. That, of course, is none of my affair—but we Socialists here in Germany are in a very ticklish position, our motives are all the time being twisted by the opposition to appear treasonable, and though we represent too large a percentage of the population for the Government to suppress by force, our leaders are frequently imprisoned or shot, upon one pretext or another. We are anxious to coöperate with the Russian Socialists toward a separate peace; but the impression about us which you give the Wilhelmstrasse is a matter for serious consideration. The least shadow of wrong impression will be fatal to somebody!"

THE visitors glanced at each other somewhat in surprise. "What's the idea, Sandy?" asked McMurtagh. "Why all this rigmarole to *us?*"

"You've said it! Why do you call me Sandy—and speak as if our acquaintance had extended back of the last ten days!"

McMurtagh—known throughout Europe as Earl Trevor of Dyvnaint, when he dressed, looked and acted like himself—noticed the dictaphone box on the desk and the switches on the lower side of the desk-top, just over Obermeyer's knees. Throwing the switch back on the other contact, before the newspaper man realized what he was doing he quietly remarked:

"I wish you'd ask the gentleman downstairs whether anyone can get as far as this floor without being seen!"

Although Obermeyer knew they could kill him before any assistance could arrive,—in case they happened to be other than the men he supposed them,—he nodded approval at this test of his own good faith.

"You heard what the gentleman said, Henry!" he said to the dictaphone. "Tell him about our arrangements!"

Instantly and distinctly, a voice replied:

"Nobody can get to the stairs without coming through this office, sir. There is no lift. Some one is alw—"

The voice was choked off abruptly in the middle of a word, as McMurtagh pushed over the switch; and it continued when he pushed it back: "—uty here, every hour of the twenty-four."

McMurtagh closed the switch. "I apologize, Sandy. Your remarks gave us a bit of a jolt, considerin' our recent experience with Smyth-Dorrien in Berlin—but we understand your position. You've got to be dead sure about us! Very good! Do you remember what the Graf von Mannheim said, eighteen months ago, just before we shot him in that cellar? 'Stop, comrades! I am of the Wilhelmstrasse like yourselves! I am W-S 719, and the code-number for this month is 922!' Do you also remember the night we discovered Franz Yrdla to be a woman—a Roumanian countess—and assisted her to escape through Switzerland?"

"My word!" exclaimed Obermeyer in a suddenly altered accent. "I must certainly compliment you chaps on your make-up an' facial control! It would be impossible for anyone who saw you upon either of those occasions to recognize you now! Are ye by way of bein' puir Downin' Street? Or perhaps you're Syndicate bodies as well? Eh?"

McMurtagh scribbled something on a pad, held it before the Herr Direktor's eyes for a moment—then burned it.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Sandy then. "This is an unexpected honor, sir! I'd really no idea that the owners ever mixed in the detail-work of the organization at all! H-m-m—this makes what I've to tell you all the more important."

"Something in the press dispatches?"

"No—right here in Munich! I don't know what sort of a discussion you had the other night at Baron Hoffmeyer's *Schloss* in the mountains, but there must have been some pretty straight talk. Two of my men got hints of it here in the city. And talk of that sort

is about the same as dynamite anywhere in the Central empires! It simply isn't done, you know! You evidently gave the Gräfin von Kessel a jolt that started something—she was here this afternoon to pump me. Just what happened up there in the mountains I don't know, but she evidently started to denounce you and—changed her mind on account of some credentials you produced. At present she's rather up in the air—doesn't know what to think. But she's suspicious of you yet—dev'lish suspicious! An' she'll not rest until she knows more, one way or the other.

"Aside from her, there's a Colonel von Trupp who came from Berlin several days ago. I'm quite positive he's a secret-service man sent up by the General Staff to smell out Socialist activities here and see if rumors of an impendin' revolutionary movement in this corner of the Empire have any foundation. He has a back room over yon—Fürstenfelderstrasse. I've been watchin' him for the last three evenin's from this window, and have just put a dictaphone receiver within three feet of his desk. I fancy he may come back to do some writin' before he turns in; an' if he happens to fetch anyone up there for a powwow, we're likely to overhear something that'll give an idea as to how much danger you're in. I'll switch off the lights an' pull up this shade—eh? I've three pairs of prism-binoculars here—"

AS Obermeyer darkened the room and raised the shade, a match flared behind the shutters of the room on the other street. "Ha!" he exclaimed. There's the bounder now! Window with the blinds closed—fourth house from the corner!"

McMurtagh and the Major focused their glasses.

"By Jove, Sandy, it's a woman—if I'm lookin' at the right window! Aye—she's lightin' the gas! My word! It's the fascinatin' little Gräfin! Now, what the deuce! . . . . Eh? Is she workin' with your Colonel chap?"

"On the contr'ry! He was makin' inquiries about her yesterday. If our information about him is correct,—and it came direct from Berlin,—he's detailed in the milit'ry secret service—has no connection with the *Auswärtiges Amt* at all. Zimmermann certainly doesn't give the General Staff information about any of his agents unless it is particularly ordered—an' I doubt if there are half a dozen people in Munich who know the girl is really a countess or that she is connected with the Wilhelmstrasse. She and the Colonel are really up here in Bavaria for the same purpose, but I'd wager a hundred guineas that he, at least, doesn't know it. As for the girl herself—her bein' in that room over yon looks as though she were dev'lish suspicious of him an' means to find out what he's up to. She's takin' a deuce of a risk, if you ask me! Ha! Watch her! Hears somebody comin'! Lookin' for a place to hide! My word! She's a good bit of nerve—what? I say—you chaps! I connected up that dictaphone in a hurry this evening—an' I'll not swear it wont work both ways. So from the moment I open the switch you'd best keep absolutely quiet. Don't even knock against anything!"

WITH their glasses focused on the window, they watched the Gräfin von Kessel, admiring the coolness with which she stood perfectly still and looked about until she located a door that could open into nothing but a closet. As McGregor threw open the switch, they could distinctly hear footsteps coming up the stairs in the other house. Before the door opened, she had stepped noiselessly across the room and shut herself in the closet, after turning off the light before anyone could have seen a reflection from it. In a couple of moments another match was struck. They saw Colonel von Trupp standing by the gas-jet, with another man behind him. This other was a spectacled, black-whiskered Bavarian with a pompadour cropped like a blacking-brush. He calmly seated himself by the flat-topped desk as if this visit to the room of a military spy were a matter of frequent occurrence. Pulling a porcelain pipe from the breast-pocket of his frock coat, he methodically loaded and lighted it.

"I have not so very much time, Herr

Oberst—as I have to address a meeting of the Numismatic Society before twelve. So let us understand each other as quickly as possible. You come up here with certain messages to me from the Socialists of Berlin and Hamburg. You have given me passwords we use only among ourselves—to prevent mistakes. So I have no reason to doubt that you are one of us, as you claim. You say they are talking of measures—down there in the lower states—which are nothing less than revolutionary! I will admit to you that, in our judgment, the present form of government cannot be maintained much longer. The fortunes of war are turning against us—no matter what reports the General Staff may give out. Sooner or later the masses will understand this, and there will be an upheaval—"

"You seem to think, Herr Doktor, that the German people may eventually turn against the Kaiser and his government? I can't go as far as that with you!"

"And yet you speak of strikes, and of resolutions in the Reichstag which show an actual loss of confidence in them! Be logical, Herr Oberst—be logical! If you say 'A,' you must say 'B,' as every schoolboy has been taught. Look you, *mein Freund!* Already there is muttering—on empty bellies! Conditions cannot improve; they will be worse. The bellies will shrink—the muttering become louder! Unless the Kaiser voluntarily makes sweeping concessions, very soon, there will be little troubles all over the Empire. Those troubles will grow; they will hamper the fighting abilities of our armies. Already the strikes in the Krupp works have caused a serious shortage of ammunition on the Western front, where it was desperately needed. Hindenburg is losing ground! You know it—I know it! It is but a question of time when the masses know it.

"SHOULD the Kaiser die this summer, as is not unlikely," went on the Bavarian, "do you think the people will accept the Kronprinz for their emperor? Never! He is what he is—no ruler for the Fatherland! We Bavarian Socialists are conferring—considering, getting ready for eventualities. We don't know, as yet, what we can do or will do—the events of a single week may bring us to a decision. But things cannot go on as they are—that is certain. In Ulm—which is nearer Switzerland than we are—they talk of drastic measures, sweeping changes, things that would startle you if you heard them discussed and noted the vehemence of their language. A secret meeting is to be held there on Friday night in a *Grosserkeller.* You can easily commandeer one of the military motor-cars—why not run over with me and see for yourself what the real undercurrent is, here in the highlands? You're one of us—I can vouch for you!"

"An excellent suggestion, Herr Doktor! I'll get the car and go with you. But I hope their precautions against a military raid will be effective. I'm supposed to be serving in a minor capacity on the General Staff, and if I happened to be arrested at any such meeting as you suggest, I'd probably face a firing-squad. And—by the way, it has been hinted to me that three men—who recently came from the Camarilla in Petrograd, and are now in Munich—are really emissaries of the Russian Provisional Government whose errand it is to stir up something in Germany. Do you know anything about them which might give color to that supposition?"

"I have not met them personally, but one of our organization was up in the mountains the other night, at Baron Hoffmeyer's *Schloss,* and he told me of a conference with those men at which they spoke with the utmost frankness—didn't mince matters at all—said things which, if repeated to any Prussian officer, would be their death-warrants. They will be asked to address that meeting at Ulm on Friday night—but they'll be wise if they refuse. A talk among fellow-guests at a mountain *Schloss* is one thing. In a meeting of several hundred people it is a very difficult matter to be sure that there are no spies within hearing."

AS the Herr Doktor finally put on his hat and started for the door, McGregor switched off the dictaphone connection.

"Faith, I don't know how it strikes you chaps, but I'd say it's either that bounder's life or yours! More than that: if we permit him to attend that meetin' in Ulm, as a supposed Socialist, it'll mean the arrest of everyone he can identify, an' milit'ry executions in wholesale batches! It's quite easy to go over the roofs an' cross to those other buildings by a fire-escape—but there's no hurry. He keeps his wet-goods an' rain-coat in that closet—will be opening the door presently—an' then we'll hear something int'restin'! If the Gräfin isn't armed, so that she can shoot him first, I fancy he'll kill her without much argument. Question is—shall we not interfere, an' fix him afterward?"

The Honorable Aloysius (otherwise Earl Trevor of Dyvnaint) came back from a corner of the room where he had been lighting a fresh cigar under cover of his coat—shielding the glowing tip in the hollow of his hand.

"Who was that other chap, Sandy?"

"The Herr Doktor Franz Spitzer—Egyptologist and authority on Greek sculpture at the Glyptothek. You get a pretty fair idea of him from what he said. He deals in exact knowledge—hobby with him—conceited old chap, like all the professional class over here, but honest. That's why our friend the Oberst pulled the wool over his eyes so completely. You can see that he's swallowed Von Trupp's account of himself, believes the bounder to be a northern Socialist willing to go as far as the people up here in Bavaria, once he sees the necessity for it. The cold logic in a situation is everything to Spitzer, d'ye see—it overbalances even loyalty to Kaiser Bill. When the Herr Doktor is once convinced that Bill Hohenzollern has ruined Germany for generations to come, he'll be quite ready to work, in his phlegmatic, methodical way, toward eliminatin' the autocrat proposition an' rebuilding Germany on a civilized basis. He's nearly convinced—now. He credits Von Trupp with the same logical sense, which is where he entirely fails to understand the milit'ry Prussian. He's an infant in a game like this—compared with that cursed Oberst!"

"Er—I fawncy you're quite right, Sandy! He'll have to be eliminated. About the girl, however—I'm inclined to take a sportin' chance. I fancy we might arrange a situation which'll close her mouth as a matter of personal honor—an' eventually get a few ideas of eternal right an' justice into her head that'll shift her point of view materially. At all events, I'm not disposed to see that bounder murder her. If—er—if one had a good Lee-Metford in one's hand at this moment—with a silencer on the muzzle of it—eh?"

McGregor stepped to a closet and took from it a long object which he handed to McMurtagh.

"It's a bit risky for a man occupyin' my position to have an English weapon on his premises, but this Mauser has a silencer an' shoots about an inch high at that distance! I'd forgotten the thing until you mentioned it. Just let me shove the lower sash clear up, an' then I'll switch-in the dictaphone again!

"Not a sound, now!"

THEY could hear even the crackle of the stiff writing-paper as Von Trupp folded a letter he had been writing and placed it in an envelope. For a few moments he sat in his chair—considering something. Then he lighted a cigar and started for the closet. McGregor was between the Honorable Aloysius and Major Brady and he felt the muscles of His Lordship's arm harden to undulating steel as the tenseness of the situation increased. They saw Von Trupp grasp the knob and open the closet door—to find a woman's slightly pale face within a foot of his own. It was evident that she had no weapon—but she was cool enough, for all that.

"*Donner!* And who the devil are you!"

"Hilda, Gräfin von Kessel! Known to the Wilhelmstrasse as W-S 613. I had supposed the Oberst von Trupp to be of the General Staff secret service—but we of the *Auswärtiges Amt* take nothing for granted. I've heard a rather interesting conversation, Herr Oberst!"

The man stepped quickly to the nall door, which he locked—then seated himself, without offering her a chair.

His little red eyes bored into hers with a malevolent expression that sent a shiver down her back in spite of herself.

"So! You are Gräfin—and of the Wilhelmstrasse! *Ja!* I must compliment you, Fräulein! You were, of course, rehearsing that little story while we had you cooped up in the closet. I knew when I first glanced at my desk that some one had been going through it—but supposed whoever it was had escaped before we came in. Well, Fräulein, it is a regrettable necessity, of course—you appear to be a most interesting type. One sees the possibilities of many pleasant hours with such a woman. But unfortunately the Kaiser and the Fatherland come first. After six o'clock there is nobody else in this building above the basement—so it will be useless to call for help."

Her face had grown perceptibly paler, but her voice was steady enough. "Then—you were not talking merely to draw out the Herr Doktor? You are really a traitor to His Imperial Majesty—a revolutionist! Pah!"

"Capital, Fräulein—capital! As an actress, you would have been a success—what a pity you didn't try the stage instead of the more dangerous game! Look you! Is it supposable that the Wilhelmstrasse would have omitted your name to me—knowing we would be working in Munich at the same time? You see how ridiculous! A man, now, in your position, would know there is no argument in the matter—and that he must die. But women are always great cowards—that is why they can never hope to be our equals in the serious affairs of life."

He was looking her over in brutish appreciation of the something in her face which was not pure beauty but a vital emanation infinitely more attractive. As he rather deliberately got out of his chair, she looked wildly about the room for something which might be used as a weapon. The pointed wire of a memorandum-file was the only thing within reach, but it promised a few desperate punctures before his superior strength overcame her.

When he stepped around the corner of the desk, however, there was a slight but distinct thump of an impact, somewhere, accompanied by a mysterious twitching of the shutters in one of the window-blinds. Von Trupp stopped—stood perfectly still for a moment, an expression of doubt and amazement flickering across his face. Then he swayed a little, steadied himself, with a hand on the desk—and pitched forward upon the floor, with a jar which shook the walls.

WITH a growing horror in her eyes, she walked around him—a step at a time. A crimson stain was spreading through his gray-green uniform tunic between the shoulders. She forced herself to push one hand beneath the body and feel for its heart—but there was not the slightest pulsation. The man was dead. Before getting upon her feet again, she noticed a tiny spot on one of the shutters where a segment, a quarter of an inch across, had been neatly chipped from its edge. The bullet had come through the window—might have been intended for her, when he stepped directly into the line of fire.

Keeping her head below the level of the sill, she crawled toward the wall until directly under the gas-jet—then sprang up and turned it off so quickly that it would have been almost impossible to hit her with another shot. Before leaving the room, she had to get the key from the dead man's pocket, and it occurred to her to pull his legs around until the position of the body indicated that he had been shot from the doorway instead of through the window. Not knowing whether the jar had been heavy enough to arouse the people in the basement, she concealed herself at the end of the hall and waited for several minutes.

Presently she became conscious of scarcely audible footsteps which she had difficulty in locating. Halfway up the hall, there was a door giving access to a closet in which a ladder led to the roof. As she crouched lower in her corner, this door swung noiselessly open, there was the dark blur of a figure moving stealthily along to the room where the body lay. She crept after it, and—her eyes being adjusted to the

darkness by this time—noted its movements against the lighter gray of the open shutters. The man seemed to know exactly what he wanted, but stumbled once over the body on the floor—which appeared to surprise him only by its changed position from where it had first fallen.

Going straight to the bookcase against the side wall, he removed several of the volumes, cut some wires with a pair of nippers and drew out a wooden box which he tucked under one arm. Replacing the books, he then went out of the room as silently as he had come—and up the ladder to the roof.

She reached the foot of the ladder just in time to see his profile against the stars. Closing the door, she leaned against the wall—too utterly amazed, for the moment, to steal down the stairs. A striking resemblance was possible, of course, but scarcely so in any other man who might be where he was under the circumstances. There was little question in her mind that it was he who had fired the shot which killed Von Trupp in the nick of time to save her life—and who had evidently heard every word of the talk in that room by means of a dictaphone which he was prudently removing before the body was discovered. And there seemed no possible doubt as to his identity: the Honorable Aloysius McMurtagh, Irish-American capitalist, member of the Camarilla and Green Circle in Petrograd, emissary of the Russian Socialists, who had been given the highest credentials by the Wilhelmstrasse—the man whom she had apparently caught betraying Germany as a revolutionist, then had found to be even higher than herself in the Imperial service and finally had doubted more than ever. What was the explanation?

NEXT morning Baron Hoffmeyer called upon the three gentlemen who had been his guests in the mountains and took them up to the Glyptothek—where they were introduced to the Herr Doktor, Franz Spitzer. (They afterward learned that he had made a point of asking for the introduction.) The Doktor led them up to an isolated room in a wing of the building devoted to black marble statues of the earlier Egyptian dynasties—a room where nobody could enter the single door without being observed before he overheard any of the talk—and plunged into a discussion of the war conditions. McMurtagh presently remarked upon the fact that neither the Baron nor the Doktor appeared to have been drafted into the army.

"But why should we be drafted for the sort of work which a man of the lowest intelligence can do, *mein Herr!* The Herr Baron Hoffmeyer is a chemical expert upon beer-brewing who has the most exact knowledge upon that subject of any man in Bavaria! Myself, I am one of three men in all Germany whose assurance is final that the statue you see in that corner is really an authentic portrait of Rameses Second. To expose our accumulated knowledge and intelligence to the vicissitudes of trench-warfare would be criminal waste and folly!"

"Suppose the tide turns—and the enemy gets into Munich? What would happen to you gentlemen then?"

"We would be sent to the rear, with all of our more indispensable documents. It has all been arranged!"

"Rather fortunate that you have no such cathedrals as Rheims or Louvain in Germany—which it would be impossible to remove!"

"*Mein Herr,* you probe a wound by that remark! We Bavarians have different reasoning processes from the Prussians. Many of us cannot forgive them Rheims upon the ground of military necessity—even though some of our own troops were compelled to fire the shots which destroyed it! We Bavarians have accomplished much in art and science which the world has respected. Now we are forfeiting even that respect by what we seem to be! It is this which makes potential revolutionists of men like me. But we haven't gone that far—yet. We are seeking a less destructive way. This meeting at Ulm, which I understand you may address, will show you something of the unrest among us—the widespread dissatisfaction with things as they are. But don't for one moment forget that

in all Germany the Kaiser's law is the law of the whole country—not to be broken! Rules are rules! *Verboten* means literally *forbidden*—on pain of death! In America, I'm told, things are different."

"Up to a certain point, Herr Doktor," replied McMurtagh, "your way has its advantages—but Germany has proved that it can amount to mania. I wouldn't live under such a government for any consideration! Slipshod as we undoubtedly are in America, in that respect, we get more out of life than you do—and we've not the curse of a military autocracy!"

"Some day, perhaps, we shall evolve the ideal medium way, *mein Herr.* Meanwhile let me again caution you against addressing that meeting! It has been hinted to me that some of the military spies are almost certain to be where they can overhear what is said. The place is an old wine-cellar from which two rows of tuns have been removed to a drier cellar on higher ground. If you attend that meeting, let me suggest that you push through to the end farthest from the stairs by which you go down. Behind the last two tuns there is a stack of twenty-gallon casks against the wall. Six of the middle ones have been nailed together and swing outward upon concealed hinges—pull at the one with a splash of whitewash on it. A narrow door behind them leads to the cloisters of a monastery on the next street. If the place is raided, you can easily escape that way."

THE DOKTOR was so much in earnest that McMurtagh wondered if he really suspected Von Trupp, after all, and—knowing nothing of his death—feared that he would set a trap for wholesale arrests at Ulm. When Friday came, they motored across to that city in an army car which the Baron had borrowed, and about ten in the evening they slipped into an old wine-house on one of the canals running through the west end of the city into the Danube. One at a time, they were passed through ground-floor rooms of three different buildings until they reached the broad stairs leading down to a vast cellar running under all of them. This was dimly lighted by hanging lanterns in which coach-candles were burning. Upon seats made by laying rough planks over the tops of upended casks, was a quiet if occasionally muttering crowd of several hundred men and women. Three years before, anywhere in Germany, such a crowd would have given the impression of rotundity—puffy red cheeks, paunches, protuberant breasts, piggish eyes, twinkling with coarse humor—*tableaux vivants* from "Simplicissimus." This assemblage, however, presented a marked contrast.

In many respects it would have been inspiration for a Doré in an up-to-date conception of Purgatory. The rotundity was mostly gone. Belts were tightened until they puckered coats which had been made to larger measure; waists hung loosely over corsets apparently too large for their wearers; cheeks were hollow and drawn. These were the cogs, the infinitesimal cogs, upon the vast rims of government wheels. Uneasily, cowering in fear at its own thoughts, a monster was slowly writhing upon its coils—with half-filled belly and gnawing hunger, with three years' accumulation of its dead to meditate upon.

AS he sat in the shadow at the farther end of the big cellar, Earl Trevor was conscious of a power to say things which would send the crowd into the streets a potential *Frankenstein*—but lacking the numbers or the strength to accomplish more than a local riot, with a few hundred corpses upon the pavements at sunrise. The time had not yet arrived; the belief in personal liberty of action was not yet strong enough.

Presently a Socialist member of the Reichstag stood upon a cask and addressed them. He knew his audience—what it was capable of understanding and what not. To Hoffmeyer and the Englishmen his ultimate object was entirely clear—his methods those of a master demagogue. He meant to stir them just far enough so that they would go home and do a little of their own thinking—whisper those thoughts

among themselves. A week or two later he meant to give them stronger meat. As he finished, there was a murmur of applause—muttered discussion—then a sudden scuffle at the end of the cellar. Two women tore the hood and raincoat from another seated near them and denounced her as a spy.

It was quite evident that she was of a different breed from her neighbors. The pale but vividly intelligent face, the luminous eyes, the finely shaped thoroughbred head and figure—these presented a contrast which set her apart from every other woman in the place and seemed evidence enough to damn her. A hoarse growl of rage went through the crowd. Sinister faces drew closer, inch by inch. The Reichstag member had a vague impression of having seen her before somewhere in Prussia, but wasn't sure. As for the girl, it was evident that she hadn't calculated upon the possibility of such a denouncement—provided, as she had been, with all the passwords to gain admission. Her hesitation, while trying to decide upon the most plausible thing to say, nearly proved a death-sentence. The mob surged forward with outstretched, clawing fingers—but McMurtagh jumped lightly upon the cask and raised his hand.

"Stop! The Fräulein is one of us! She is of the Russian Socialists in Petrograd and has to think out what she wishes to say before she can express it in German! She has been working for the cause with us in Munich, disguised as a Prussian! If you harm her, it will be as foolish as the pigs of English—considering all she has done for your interests!"

"And who are *you*—that knows so much about her?"

"One of the leaders among the Petrograd Socialists! Three of us have brought you messages from them. Here is Baron Hoffmeyer, the master-brewer, who will tell you we are all right! We thought of addressing you this evening, but the Herr Kronold has covered a good deal of what we would have said. Some other night we will—"

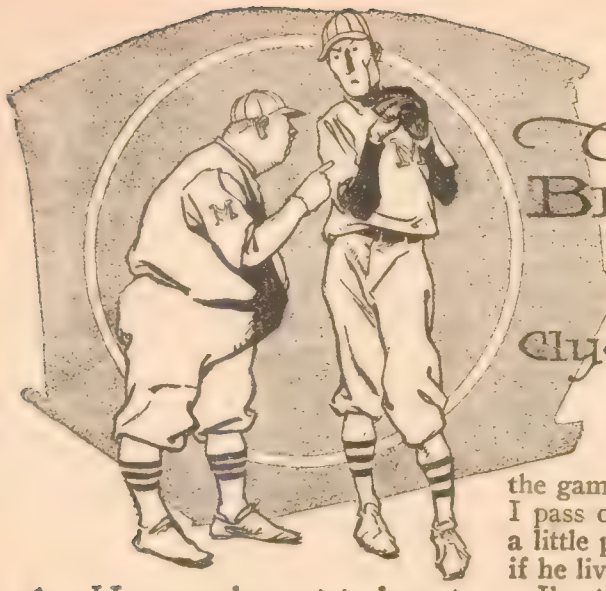
THERE were sounds of a struggle upon the floor above. Shots were fired. A voice from the stairs called out: "The soldiers say we must come out and tell the Herr General why we meet down here like rats in a sewer!" "No! No!" replied several voices. "Let us all rush up together and push through into the street! They can't see who we are in the dark!"

As the crowd surged toward the stairs and the sound of fighting above increased, McMurtagh drew the girl behind the big tun nearest them and began looking for a white patch on the pile of smaller casks behind it. In a moment he had swung out the ones screening the door in the wall, and the five squeezed through into a long tunnel which eventually took them out into the cloisters of the monastery. Fifteen minutes later the army car was racing eastward to Munich. Just before sunrise they dropped His Lordship and the Fräulein at her aunt's house. At her request he stepped into a pitch-dark reception-room when she had silently opened the door with her pass-key.

"That's twice you've saved my life, *mein Herr!* Proof enough, one would say, that you are exactly what you wish me to believe. And yet—I don't. You're a personage, my friend—a much higher one than anybody in Munich or Berlin supposes. What your real ideas are in regard to Germany's future, I can't make out. In many respects, you seem to be a man years ahead of your time. Whatever you are, whatever you do in Germany, I'll not forget that twice within forty-eight hours you could have blotted me out of existence as easily as stepping upon a crippled butterfly in your path; instead of that, you carefully removed it out of harm's way. The poor butterfly thanks you, *mein Herr*—and offers her services for any use you may require. Now go—before it gets light enough for anyone to see."

Standing on her tiptoes, she kissed him—then ran back to the window and watched the tall figure swinging easily down the street. The man was an enigma to her.

Another adventure of the Free Lances in Diplomacy will appear in the September BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—on sale August 1st.



The Brain Marvel

by Clyde A. Bruckman

ALL a guy has got to have to get by in this world is luck and a strong line of talk. I'd rather be lucky than be as smart as a college professor. If you can punch the bag and pal with four-leafed clovers, your fortune is the same as in the bank.

Look at Bill Price! He could put his brains in his shoes and still have room for his feet. He don't know whether knowledge is a disease or a hair-tonic, but he's so lucky he makes a horseshoe look like a sign of death. All Bill's got is luck and a gift of gab, and between the two he got the rep' of being a wise guy—a brain marvel. Put Bill on a desert, and he'd find the fountain of youth.

Sore on him? Sure I am! Didn't he come out in the papers yesterday and accuse me of everything from murder to porch-climbing. You know he did! He says I made a fool out of him. It's swell of Bill to give me the credit, but I aint going to take no glory that don't belong to me, 'cause Bill was a fool long before I met him. He goes on to say in his article that it was me that gummed up everything in the World's Series last fall—that I double-crossed him and all the rest of the boys on our club. He says it wouldn't surprise him none if I was missing from the Maulers this season. He's guessed right for once in his life, 'cause I retired from the game to-day. I'm quits, but before I pass out, I'm going to slip Bill Price a little press-notice that he wont forget if he lives to be as old as his jokes.

I've taken a lot off Bill, but when he started passing the buck in the papers, he went too far. Mebbe some of the fans fall for that alibi gag, and mebbe they think I'm quitting just because that lop-eared microbe is on me, but I aint. I've saved my dough, and I can make more kale in my new business than I can by sticking with the game. Anyway, if I hung around with the Maulers, people might think I was friendly with Bill, and then I'd be in bad the rest of my life. This little story I'm telling you is just to set the fans right on this guy Price. He's a four-flusher. He's dug his own grave, and I'm going to put up the monument.

MEBBE you remember when I broke in with the Maulers six years ago last spring. Old Mike Riley was managing the club then, and a finer guy never sat on a bench; he was square. Mike and frills were strangers, but he was one hundred per cent human and a friend that would stick.

We had a fair club them days, but John Jinx had a locker in our clubhouse, and we never had no more chance of copping a pennant than I had of leading the league last year with my batting average of .184. Boy, it was murder! Every time we got within gunshot of first place, half the regulars would get busted up. One time mumps was the style; then came pneumonia,

appendicitis, broken arms and legs and strained soup-bones. It got so that every time we took the field it looked like the boys coming in from Bull Run. Most of the pitchers had such sore arms they couldn't do nothing but throw fungoes up to the plate.

Every year it was the same way. No matter how good our club was, we never got nowhere, 'cause injuries kept four or five men out of the game all the time. Two years ago we had the best club in the league, and we finished fourth. It was the same old story of injuries putting our best men out at the critical times. The boys that was in there was favoring their arms and legs half the time because of some ailment.

The fans didn't know what was the matter, and they was howling for a change of managers. The papers took up the yelp, and the big boss saw the writing on the wall. Right away he came out with a big noise in the papers, assuring the fans that he would give them a manager that would be the sensation of the league. He said that Mike was a fine, square fellow, but a little old-fashioned in his methods. He went on to say that he had a man in view who was one of the cleverest birds in the game—a brain marvel who was a cross between a magician and a fortune-teller. The big boss opined that the fans wanted a man with new ideas, one who would spring new stuff and set the world on fire with his craft.

TWO weeks later he came out with the announcement that he had landed the bird he was after. Bill Price was the new manager's label. Price had led a club to three straight pennants in the B. E. League, and the boss pointed out the mess of stars Price had sent to the big show. The boss had promised a sensation, and he delivered the goods—take it from me!

They was columns and columns of dope in the papers about Price. Nobody ever heard of him outside of the B. E. League. His big-league experience consisted of two games seen from the bleachers at Cincinnati. He had played ball a few years in some little one-lung leagues, and then he fell into this job in the B. E.

The big boss sure put the fans in the air. It was a cold knock-out to them. They didn't know any more about Price than they did about what kind of wood is in the North Pole. They couldn't get the idea of a bush-leaguer coming up to run a big league club. If Price had been a big-show star who had hid out in the B. E. for a few years and was coming back, it would have been different; but here was a guy that didn't belong, a rank outsider horning in as a manager.

Between the time Price was appointed and the start for the spring training-camp, the papers was full of dope about our new brain marvel. They dug up stories telling about clever stuff he pulled down in the bush-leagues. They even printed a lot of interviews with Price. In one of 'em he said he'd make a smart ball-club out of the Maulers if he had to pound the knowledge into the players with a hammer. That made him as strong with the players as Billy Sunday would be at a brewers' convention.

The tough part of the whole thing was the fact that the brain marvel was stepping into a soft job. Mike had built our club up until we was an even bet against the field. On top of that the big boss went out and bought Bob Hauser and Perry Dawson, which gave us three ball-clubs to start with. Both Hauser and Dawson were .300 hitters and swell all-around players. Say—any boob could take them two to Cincinnati and win a pennant.

IN February we had our mass-meeting at the club offices, and started on our trip South for the spring-training punishment. We picked up some of the boys on the way, and some of 'em joined us there. Them last guys was the lucky ones, 'cause the rest of us had a severe attack of Price all the way down. He was busier than a one-armed plate-umpire with fleas.

By the time we landed at Curem Springs, we was ready to laugh at his funeral. He was all swelled up over himself, and he went around telling us what he was going to do and how things had to be run. On top of that he was tighter than a new pair of shoes.

Say—the first week at Curem Springs was murder. Between rotten weather, sore arms, Price and the training-camp, we had more troubles than the Germans. The steaks they gave us was just big enough to make a poultice for a black eye. The soup was weaker than my line drives. They used up all the springs putting 'em in the ground, and they wasn't none left for the beds. When it wasn't raining, the wind was blowing so hard you couldn't go outside without an anchor. Oh, fine!

Then when we got to working good, Price broke loose right. I'll tell the world he had some new ideas on baseball—so new that they wont be ready for use until 2067. One day Hauser was up hitting while Price stood back watching him.

"Say, Hauser," he yells, "where'd you learn to hit?"

"I never learned," said Hauser. "It's a habit."

"Cut the comedy!" orders Price. "You don't time your swings."

"I left my watch at the hotel."

"One more crack like that, an' I'll take your money."

"You can't—the boys did that in the poker-game."

"Forget it! Come here; I want to show you somethin'."

Can you beat that? There Price was trying to show Hauser how to bat, and Bob never hit under .315 in his life. Crust? Say—Price would make a burglar look like a ribbon-clerk. If he had a chance, he'd show Cobb how to steal bases or Matty how to get control.

TWO days later Price was out showing Cy Miller how to pitch. Cy ranks right up there with Johnson, Alex and the rest of the strong boys, and this bush-leaguer goes out and tries to tell him something.

"You're losin' too much force with that wind-up," says Price.

"That's better than losin' ball-games," says Cy.

"You don't get my idea. See—try this move once."

"I aint goin' to mix no drinks this season—so what do I want with that move?"

"Say, listen! I'm runnin' this ball-club, and you listen to me, or they'll be trouble around here. Get me?"

"Don't accuse me of gettin' you; the boss done that."

That's what we got every day. If he wasn't lecturing us in groups, he'd pick us out one at a time and tell us our faults. And the worst of it was that his head was as free from brains as a desert is of icebergs. It got so funny that none of us could get sore about it; so we let him rave and pretended to take it all in.

Before the spring training-trip was over, he was the joke of the camp. Whenever the boys got together, they would mock him all over the place.

"Now, see here," Hap Williams, our left fielder, would say: "You aint doin' that right. You, Carson! Get on the job! When you're up there at the plate, hit where you're lookin'. You look to left field an' hit to right. That aint fair. You're takin' an unfair advantage of the pitcher. Now, when I was playin' ball, we did this an' —"

A shower of shoes or rocks would stop the oration.

AFTER a bungling homeward trip, filled with exhibition games and Price, we landed home for the opening of the season. Chi cut loose against us in the opener.

Say—I've seen guys have wild runs of luck playing poker or shooting craps, but the stuff Price got away with in that first game won the turkey. On the level, he pulled stuff that nobody ever dreamed of before—and got away with it.

Besides that he made a couple of fluke guesses, and when the sun set on the end of a perfect day, Price was the hero of the hour.

Look at the third inning, when we had men on second and third with one down, with Dawson and Hauser coming up! Dawson hit a long fly to left. It would have been a cinch for the bird on third to score after the catch, but Price, who was coaching on third, gave both runners the all-the-way sign, and they put their heads under their arms and tore for home. What did the Cub left fielder do but trip and fall flat just as he was ready to catch the pill,

and all three guys scored. It was one chance in a million, and Price got the benefit of that one chance.

In the fifth Chi filled the bases with one down and Zim up. What did Price do but call Williams in right behind the shortstop. It looked like suicide until Zim hit one a thousand miles a minute right over short, and Williams had to catch it or get killed. It was a cinch double-play, and Price took the credit, when only luck saved him and the ball-game.

It was that way with everything he tried. We argued with him, but he only told us he was boss around there and went ahead giving bug-house orders right and left. If we told him something he ordered was wrong, the play would break to make us look like suckers and him like Napoleon.

THE papers came out and said the big boss had unearthed a modern Solomon—a mental giant that would lead our club out of the low places into the pennant-class. They compared him with Chance, McGraw, Mack and all the rest of the big-time leaders, past and present. Can you beat that? Not in a million years! Here is a guy that aint got a thing in the world but a wind-up, and the fans and newspaper boys hail him as a brain marvel. Shoot the piece!

Mebbe you think that first game was just a fluke or a flash in the pan, but you're off. The farther we went, the luckier this stiff got. We could have put nine pitchers on the field, and then won our games with our hitting. If Price ordered the first man up to sacrifice, a base-runner would spring up at first or second.

Between you and me, I think Price is President of the Umpire's Union. You never saw a club get so many close ones from the umps. One day I was pitching against the Reds, and I was wilder than a jungle. The guy behind the plate must have had a cramp in his throat, 'cause all he could say was "Strike." He called some on them poor Reds that was murder.

Twice in one game our outfielders trapped balls, and the umpire called the batters out. If one of our runners missed a sack, the ump would be looking at some dame in the stands. When the birds on the other clubs hit one, they would go down to first like they was packing a couple of anvils; and whenever a ball hit a stone or took a bad hop, it was one of our guys that did the hitting.

We got all the breaks in all the games. I guess Price could have thrown a paint-brush up against a fence and made a landscape painting. I don't know who invented luck, but Bill was the guy that developed it.

TAKE one day over in St. Louis. We had the Cards put away four to two in the seventh, when they started taking Dude Harris apart to see what made him tick. They was two dead when the fireworks cut loose, but that didn't stop them Cards from putting one run across and packing the sacks again. Hacker was up, and everybody knows that Hacker couldn't hit a ball to left field if the diamond was in Wall Street.

"Wait a minute!" yells Price from the pit.

"What's loose?" asks Slug Parsons, who was catching.

"Shift them fielders over to left more!"

"What for? What for?" asks Slug.

"Never mind what for—I got a hunch."

"It's your party, not mine," says Slug. "Shoot the piece."

"Suits me," says Hacker to Slug. "Has that guy got any brains?"

"I don't know," says Slug. "Mebbe—I heard somethin' rattle up there one day."

The fielders moved over, and Dude started working on Hacker. With two and one, he cut loose with a fast one. Hacker swung late, and on the level, he sent a line smash into left field! Hap Williams made a swell running catch ten feet from the foul line. That was the last noise out of the Cards, and we won the game.

"I guess the old boy don't know somethin'," says Price when we was dressing. "I guess you got to give me the credit."

"Not us," says Slug. "Nobody has

to give you any credit; you take care of that yourself."

ONE day at home we was playing Chi. I was working and having my troubles. They was laying for my fast one and murdering it when I got one in the alley. Only some swell fielding kept them from wearing out home-plate scoring runs. Along in the eighth, we cut loose and chased the Chi pitcher with four runs, and went out in front, six to five.

In the first of the ninth, a hit and a couple of boots came in a row, and the bases was drunk, with one down. Price kept me in there, and it looked like trouble, with a couple of good hitters coming up. That was a tip for Price to come pouring out of the pit with an idea. He called me and Slug to one side.

"Say—we're in a tight place, an' I got a stunt to pull on these birds. I used to work it in the B. E. League," he says.

"But that aint the big show," Slug puts in.

"Listen!" says Bill. "Baseball is baseball here or in China. Now, I want you to go back behind the plate an' tell these guys everythin' that's bein' pitched. If you call for a hook, tell 'em they's a hook comin' over."

"What do I get for throwin' the game?" asks Slug.

"Cut the rough stuff. You do as I tell you, or I'll take your money."

"Say, listen!" I says. "I got enough trouble tryin' to fool them birds without some guy tellin' 'em what I'm throwin'. What are you tryin' to do—make me look bad out there?"

"They aint nobody that could make you look any worse than you are," says Price. "I've told Slug what to do, an' it goes. Get on the job!"

Slug went back behind the plate and called for a fast one—low and over. I heard him tell the batter what was coming.

"Can the bull!" says the batter, and he took it, a perfect groover. Slug kept telling him what was coming, and he whiffed without taking his club off his shoulder. The next guy got the same thing, and he fanned, with one healthy mixed in. They whiffed 'cause they *wouldn't believe* Spud! I ask you: can you beat it? After that, Price was beyond control.

UP in Boston one day Price ordered me to walk a right-hand hitter to get at a left-hander. It happened that this right-hand hitter never could hit me, and the other bird boosted his average every time I stuck my nose in there. I told Price, but he said he was running the club, and that it was up to me to do as he ordered. I did; and after I'd walked this bird, filling the sacks, the next fellow hit one a murderous crash—right at the first baseman for a double play. Luck! Nothing but luck—and Price had the crust to come up to me after the game and say that he was some little guesser.

"Two feet either way on that drive, an' you'd guessed yourself out of a ballgame," I says.

"I guess I know what's what. That's why I'm managin' the club an' you're pitchin' for me."

Mebbe he wasn't wild about himself. If I had all the fat off his head, I'd never buy no more lard as long as I lived.

We rolled along into the last weeks of the season with a swell lead and no bum tires. The other clubs was calling us the "Horseshoes" and the "Four-Leafs," while the fans called Price the marvel of the age. The other clubs had the right dope—take it from me. A four-year-old kid could have managed our club and won a flag, 'cause we had a swell outfit and all the breaks in the world.

If some club was weakened by injuries, we met 'em when they was all crippled. The opposing fielders used to save up their errors until they got against us, and then they'd have a field-day. If our boys went out to steal a base, the catcher would have a long-distance throwing-contest with the center fielder. All the batting slumps in the world was at their best against us. It wasn't because our pitchers were too good, either. I was rated as the best thrower in the league, and I know I got away with some raw work against the boys that wasn't crashing 'em.

WHEN the final curtain went down, we was playing the lead by nine full games. Everybody was picking us to knock the other guys cold in the big series. The papers said we had the greatest manager in the game leading us. They said he was a gem that had been unearthed by the big boss, that he would sweep the other club off its feet by his craft and smart plays. Can you beat that? Price sweeping the Sox off their feet! Say—a thought with him would be a brain-storm.

Take it from me, we wasn't looking for no soft pickings with them Sox. They had a whale of a club and one of the greatest pitchers in the world—a southpaw that could wheel 'em right past you. His fast ball didn't touch no way-stations, I'll tell the world. Along with him—Krug—they had some other nifty hurlers and plenty of hitters. Man for man, we stacked up pretty even, and the only edge we got was the one the press gave us 'cause we had a brain marvel for a manager. A hot edge to go on in a big series!

Well, we opened at home with a full house. Before the game, Price was all over the place making himself easy to be seen. After he got through parading around so's the public could look him over, he came back to the pit and gave us a warmed-over speech.

"You guys do as I tell you, an' we'll make these stiffs take to cover. I've got a good line on these birds, an' you listen to me an' you'll take home the big end of the dough. I know their style of play by heart. I know what they can an' can't hit. They aint nothin' about 'em that I can't tell you offhand. That's me! You watch me, an' I'll do the rest. I'll give the signals, an' I'll run this ball-club to suit myself. If they's any mistakes made, I'll take the blame.

"Rooney," he says to me, "I'm goin' to start you to-day. These birds can't foul a southpaw's stuff. Go out there an' lay 'em across the old cash register. All you need is control an' to watch me. Go get 'em."

I'LL say I needed my control and a lot of other stuff. They was saving Krug for the second game and taking a chance on Owens slipping one over on us in the opener. Owens heaved a swell game, but they aint enough luck in his whole family to beat Price and his horseshoes.

We was tied up at the start of the ninth—one and one. I whiffed a couple, and the third guy hit a tall one that was gravy for Williams. That put it up to us.

"Wait this bird out," orders Price. "I think he's gettin' wild. Don't wave at none unless he's got two strikes on you. I got a hunch."

Perry Dawson was up. Perry just laid his war-club back over his shoulder and waited. Here was Owens, a pitcher with great control, and Price ordering us to wait 'em out. Once Owens gets a guy in the hole, that bird has wasted a time at bat—take it from me.

Dawson stood there while Owens threw *four* straight balls! Yes sir! You can't even tie that. Up came Hauser. This time Owens got one strike over before he passed Bob.

Then Price was hit with a thought and switched his style of play. He ordered Honk Mellus to swing at the first good one over. Whoever heard of a play like that? With guys on first and second, no one down and one run needed to win the ball-game, there was Price telling Mellus to swing at the first good one. The one play in the world right then was to dump one, especially with two fast, smart guys like Dawson and Hauser on the bags.

What did Mellus do but hit the first ball on the ground and right at the shortstop. It was a mighty smash, but made just right for a double or triple killing. Ten feet in front of the shortstop the ball got an idea of its own and took a sharp skip up and to one side. It went over the shortstop's head and on into the pasture-lands. One run was over, and the first game of the World Series was ours.

PRICE was writing signed stories in one of the big papers, telling why we copped or blew the games. All he did was look at the stuff, and sometimes he didn't even do that much, but he must have dictated the story of that

first game. Nobody in the world could have said so many nice things about Price except himself. He admitted in the story that it was his quick switch from a hitting to a waiting game and back again that gave the Maulers the opener. He even admitted that he gave every order, made every signal for every move, and if they was any boots in the way the game was run, he wanted to take the blame. That was swell of him, considering the fact that they wasn't nothing nobody could crab about.

Well, Krug came out for the second game, and they aint much need to say more than that. He just waved his left arm in the air a couple of times, and then whirled it toward the plate. None of us saw the stuff that siege gun was firing past us. I think Hauser got a couple of fouls, and Mellus stopped a fast one on his hip. Outside of that, we was just looking on all afternoon, and we took the count, four to nothing.

The series went along that way until we each had three games packed away, and the final brawl was picked for our home field. We was all groggy after them six games. You never saw such battles. Them first two games was kinda lopsided, but the last four was hand-to-hand fights all the way—two of 'em going into extra rounds before a knock-out could be laid across.

I got back in the fourth game, and set the boys back, four to two in ten innings. Krug came back and copped off the fifth game, and Cy Miller took the sixth for us. That put the whole thing up to the final outing, and it was me against Krug. All I had to do was shut them Sox out until Krug dropped dead or got hit by a line drive that would ruin him so's the Sox would have to stick some guy in there we could beat.

"YOU'RE a southpaw an' he's one," says Price to me before the game. "You're both human. He's only had one day's rest since the fifth game, an' you've had two since you worked. You got the best of him that way. He's bound to tire. Go out there an' pitch your head off. When he cracks, we'll step in an' cop the gravy."

"That reads well, but I aint laughin' myself to death thinkin' how easy it's goin' to be," I says.

I got by the first round swell. It was lucky for me that I was right. I never had more in my life. I depended on a sharp hook-ball mixed with a slow curve and a fast one. My control was good. Krug just had speed and a hook as wide as Texas. He didn't know whether a slow ball was a cocktail or a dance. He had some idea where he was throwing, or else he'd have killed every guy in the league. They's been a lot of arguments as to who had the most smoke, Johnson or this side-wheeling Krug. I aint never hit against Johnson, but if he's got anything on Krug, he ought to be in jail for carrying a dangerous weapon up his sleeve.

Well, in our half of the first, Squint David led off. Squint let two cut the heart of the plate without offering at 'em.

"What's the matter out there?" yells Price. "Can't you see nothin'?"

"Naw! I left my field-glasses at home," says Squint.

Squint didn't see the next one, and he was on his way back to the bench. That brought Hap Williams up. The first one was a fast one, right over. Hap passed it up. The next one was a curve ball that came up to the plate neck-high. Hap shut his eyes and swung from the ground up. A minute later he was hopping around on one foot, yelling with pain.

"Who threw that other ball in the park?" howls Hap.

"What other ball?" asks the ump.

"The one that hit me on the foot. Who threw it in here?"

"Nobody," says the ump. "That curve broke down an' hit you on the foot. That's all it was. Now play ball!"

TO this day Hap wont believe that Krug threw a hook that broke down from his head to his foot in the space of a few short feet. Anyway Hap grounded out, and Dawson flew to left.

That was the start, and for five rounds we battled all over the place. I had them Sox talking to themselves be-

fore the third. Krug wasn't as good as he had been in the other two games. He seemed to be tiring fast. He was losing his zip, but he still had enough to make us be good dogs up there at the plate.

I sat them first two Sox batters down easy in the sixth. Then up came Krug. At the same time Price came leaping out of the pit.

"Wait a minute, Red," he says to me.

He called me to one side and spilled his idea.

"Listen," he says. "This bird is goin' too good. He may tire before the ninth, an' he may not. I got an idea. They aint nobody on—let him hit one. Them next two batters are duck-soup for you. What if he does get a single or a double? You can whiff the next bird, an' then Krug will be all in, an' we can go out next innin' and win the ball-game right there."

"I don't like the idea," I says. "This bird is a good hitter. He might click one for two or three, an' the next guy scratch a hit, an' then we'd be in the mud. I say nix!"

"Say, who's runnin' this ball-club, you or me? You lay one over an' let him hit it, or I'll fine you five hundred bucks. I guess I ought to know what to do. If I aint right, I'll take the blame. It's your business to do what I order—get me?"

I went back on the hill and laid the first one right in the alley, belt-high. They wasn't nothing on the pill but the trade-mark. Krug took a reef in his frame, slouched backward and then uncoiled. It was a cross between the quick strike of a rattler and the fall of an avalanche. He made a fast one out of my slow one—take it from one who knows. The ball went on and up. It was fifty feet high when it passed over our right fielder's noble dome, and it was still fifty feet high when it cleared the right-field wall, far from the maddening crowd.

Slowly and methodically Krug passed around the bases, stopping at each sack to touch it carefully with both feet. He was not running himself to death as Price, the brain marvel, had predicted; instead, he was taking his time, laughing every step of the way, while the packed stands sat in silence except where them Sox rooters was going crazy with joy.

I WHIFFED the next man, and we went on with the battle. Krug was wabbling, but he had that one run behind him, and that one run was bigger than Price's head. We was playing for one run, and that's just the kind of a game Krug can beat. His lickings always came in one wild inning, when the enemy flocked about his fast ball for three or four runs. A club playing for one run was Krug's meat.

What did it matter that I sat them Sox down without a blow in the last three rounds? Krug was blowing fast, but he still had his wind-up and silent prayer—just enough to keep us away from the plate. And we was still beat one to nothing in the ninth when our last man fouled out with two on. One more inning, and that old ball-game would've been ours, for Krug was going, and I was getting stronger every round, and we'd had that chance but for Bill Price's brain-storm.

That was all. I was the goat. The papers and the fans said I blew the series when I eased up on Krug and let him crash one. I let it go at that, 'cause I aint no alibi-guy. I was willing to play clam and take the blame until Price came out in the papers and said it was my skull that cost the Maulers the big series. That was my cue to pop off.

Mebbe the fans wont be so crazy over their brain marvel when they read this straight dope on that series. And you can tell Bill Price for me that he better be practicing his wind-up, 'cause when his luck leaves him, he'll be back at his old trade—mixing drinks.

PETER CLARK MACFARLANE, author of "The Quest of the Yellow Pearl," "Held to Answer" and many other striking stories, has written one of his best for our next issue. On the first day of August, when you've bought your September BLUE BOOK and have made yourself comfortable for a good read-fest, turn to "The Blood of Kings" and be happy awhile.

"In the Way to Shur"

by Wilbur Hall

THE government man looked up at me from the field-books. "Dove Cleft Springs?" he asked. "It's marked the Pothole here." And he held out his worn map, painted in the seventies, and showed me.

"Yes," I said, "that was the old name."

He nodded and went on. But that night he kicked off his heavy boots, stuck his feet on a chair and loaded his pipe, and then asked me about it. "Dove Cleft—where does that come from, Uncle Nick?"

So I told him the tale of the big sandstorm, when everything on the Mohave Desert was wrenched loose or covered up, when trains were stalled for days on the main line, when my shack and Drury's store at Soda Lake went down and our roofs sailed kiting into the middle of the lake-bed, and when Marge Flood gave those waterholes their new name. You can find them marked on that government surveyor's latest map—circle around a cross—on the south edge of the Mohave, twenty miles from any other water, the most desolate, wind-swept, lonesome place in our country. It was to them that the girl was led by God, and her life saved—and those others, through His mercy, as I, Roger Nicklin, desert rat, do solemnly believe, according to what I saw and heard, forever and ever. Amen!

The first I ever knew of Marge Flood was the day she came to old Mort Drury's store at Soda Lake, and I didn't care anything about whether her baby had a father or a father's name either, because that little tad,—eight months old he was, Marge told me,—he filed a claim on me right then, and I relinquished and let him go into immediate possession, as the Land Office would say. He was such a mite of a little thing, all grin and sticky hands and soft, curly hair, and he held out those hands to me, but he wouldn't look at old Mort Drury.

So I said to Mort: "Your nose is out of joint. Do you reckon I'll bust him if I take him, Miss?"

Mort grunted at that, looking at Marge, that I hadn't scarcely noticed after I'd set eyes on the baby. Marge laughed very quietly,—it was years before she could ever laugh without having a sigh cut in,—and she said:

"He'll get you all stuck up with his candy, Mr. Nicklin."

Do you suppose I cared? Stuck up with candy! "If I had been all stuck up with candy thirty years ago by kids of my own, I wouldn't be out on this desert now, Miss," I said. "And when you come to Mr. Nicklin, there isn't any such party. I'm Uncle Nick, that's called crazy, and I'm pleased to know you."

The baby was chuckling, and now he got his two fists into my white beard. He pulled and kicked me about the breastbone and laughed. Say, there wasn't any sob in *his* laugh, by jiminy.

"What's its name?" I said, blurting it out the way an old-timer will, who's only got one idea in his head at a time.

I saw Mort Drury look at Marge quick, and she looked back at him and ducked her head.

"Aint been named yet," says Mort; and then he yelled like he was coaxing a string-team, "What's it to you, anyhow?" and began to move a half-empty flour-barrel across the store.

SOMEBODY came in the door behind me,—I saw the shadow fall on the floor,—and I turned, and there was Tom, Drury's son. Tom was a fine, straight, ruddy boy, with his father's brown eyes and strength, but without his father's surly way. I reckon he'd be called tall, too, and he was straight and clean. Tom and I were pards on a couple of claims; I'd about raised him, and I loved him too, if that's worth mentioning.

Well, Tom said hello and then looked around, and his eye caught Marge, sitting there just as she'd climbed from the Borax Company's big wagon, with her hat on and her veil thrown back from her pale face, and her old busted valise beside her. Tom's glance stopped wandering and stuck. Marge looked back at him, but only for a breath. Then her eyes went searching around the floor, and she colored and her lip quivered.

Old Mort Drury set down his flour-barrel with a thump. "Get on up to the spring, Tom," he said suddenly in his roughest voice. "That pipe's clogged again. See if you can fix it so's it'll stay fixed this time."

Tom still stared at Marge. I swung the baby out at him. "Here's a new pardner for us, Tom," I said, thinking to make it easier for the girl. "He's going in on that molybdenum claim with us—share and share alike. Shake hands with him."

Tom took his eyes off the woman for a minute and chucked a finger in the baby's ribs, but he wasn't noticing any babies. He turned back to the girl, caught her eyes on him and colored. I never saw a boy in such a doggone rush to fix a spring-pipe as he was then. He fell over a cracker-box and plunged through the door and was gone. Mort Drury crossed to Marge.

"I was telling you," he began abruptly, "—that's him. That's my son Tom."

"Oh," she says, and stood up, reaching to me for the baby. "I'll be going on back, then. Can you send me back—to-day?" Her lip quivered once more, and this time there were tears in her eyes. "Could I start now?"

Mort coughed hard and swung on me. "What in the blazes do you want?" he shouted.

I stammered. "Why, only a piece—of—of bacon, Mort. But I aint in any hurry."

"Bacon's out!" he bellowed. "Aint got a rind of bacon left. An' I'm busy, too!"

So I vamoosed. I didn't want any bacon—but Mort didn't have to lie.

OUT in the Mohave country they call me crazy. I guess it's because I believe in a Plan—one that I don't understand sometimes, and that I don't like always, and that interferes with my own often, but that I know is there. Living on the desert for forty years, most of the time alone, and seeing things big enough to make me little, I got it all figured out. So I tell them that the Engineer has got blueprints and specifications on the whole job, and I prove it to them, too.

Take this case: I've told Tom Drury this many times, and Marge Flood, and they don't call me so crazy. Because old Mort Drury and Tom and Marge and the baby would never have had the troubles that bothered them if it hadn't been for That Woman; yet she was brought into the thing by old Mort just so he could keep Marge, too. Then, if it hadn't been for That Woman, they would none of them have been saved at Dove Cleft Springs. All through they were puzzled and worried and sick over it, but the Plan was working, as I'm going to show you. Praise be to God! Amen!

Mort was a rough old customer—swearing and greedy and abusing folks and running things with a high hand, and making money at it too; but he was as gentle as a woman where his boy was concerned. And it was only for Tom's sake that Mort felt he must have a wife about if Marge Flood and her baby were to stay. Her *having* that baby looked bad enough to him—and the Power Company people were passing through our country all the time, and there was the borax outfit, and the big city aqueduct crews, and sometimes tourists dropping down through the Owens Valley. Mort wouldn't risk any talk about Tom, and he wanted the boy raised right and taught what people outside consider proper.

Well, old Mort Drury married That Woman.

His boy Tom came up troubled to me, the day after the wedding.

"I can't make her out," he said.

"Her?" I asked. "You mean your father's wife?"

"Yes. Dad took Marge and the baby into Mohave yesterday morning and met *her,* and they got married and came back late last night. I don't like the way she looks at Marge, nor the way Marge shrinks from her. That Woman is going to be hard on the girl."

This was only a week after Marge Flood first arrived at Soda Lake, and I didn't know why she had come, nor who she was, nor where she'd come from. Tom didn't know either, or care. He loved her from the start—from the minute his look fell on her sitting on a box in the store, with her old busted valise beside her. And if I hadn't known it before, I would have known now from what he said, and the way he spoke. "She's going to be hard on Marge," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"The way she acts already," Tom said.

"I mean, why should she be hard on Marge? Marge is friendly—"

"Sure. But with women it's different about—well, about—"

"Babies, Tom?"

"Yes—and things. I wish I knew about Marge; then I might know what to do. Have you heard any stories?"

"No."

Tom slashed his boot with his quirt. "Of course, I don't care what it is," he said suddenly, as though I had accused him of caring. "I wouldn't give a hang if she was—"

"Well, Tom," I said, "she isn't. Don't worry. And here's another point: maybe you're wrong about That Woman."

MAYBE it will seem strange to you that I speak of her always as That Woman. I can't help it. I never spoke of her any other way, and neither did Tom, and I didn't hear her name, aside from *Mrs. Drury,* which the people called her in the store, until long afterwards—which I'm coming to. Maybe you'll understand.

It was weeks before we learned Marge's story. Young Raeburn, the aqueduct engineer on the Haiwee division, told us—Tom and me—one night in my cabin, when he had come up to see me about a limestone deposit I'd located in the lower end of the Alabama Hills. He had heard about the two women at Soda Lake, as everyone in the desert had, and he was interested. They all were. I noticed, by the way, that lots of them grinned when they spoke of Mrs. Drury, though I couldn't find out why. But they didn't grin about Marge. She could have married two or three hundred of them, I should judge, from what I saw and from the black looks Tom would bring to my shanty, telling me about them.

Well, Raeburn dropped over to see me, and Tom came with him. After I'd fixed it up to go to the quarry with him in August, Raeburn shook out his pipe and asked us how the women liked the desert. Tom spoke up.

"I saw you looking at Marge Flood, Mr. Raeburn. And you recognized her."

Raeburn colored a little. "Yes. What of it, Tom?"

Tom swallowed once; then he looked the engineer in the eye. "I'd like to know about her," he said, and I saw it was a hard thing to say.

Raeburn frowned and began marking lines on my old pine table. "What difference does it make, Tom? I'll

never tell anyone else—why should I tell you?"

Tom had thought it all out; that was plain. "I'll tell you why, Mr. Raeburn. I think my father's wife knows something and means to use it. But I don't—and that leaves me in a blind cañon, you see."

Raeburn looked up, and I watched him. He glanced at Tom; then he stared off through the window, where you could see a young moon going down over the black buttes west of Mohave. He was putting together in his mind what he knew of women, especially of these two, and what he suspected of Tom's feelings. Then he pulled out a pocketknife and a bit of shale sample and began whittling that shale into fine shavings. It was no easy job before him, I thought.

"YOU remember our chief engineer, Tom?" Raeburn began. "He was through Soda Springs a good many times in nineteen-five and -six, when the project was first laid out."

"Yes, I remember him," Tom said.

So did I! There was a man for you, with an eye that could see a lie before it popped out, and a kindliness that could wrap itself around you when you were down, and warm you. I remembered the chief engineer. He never called me Crazy Roger Nicklin, but he'd ask me about formations and winter freshets and water-holes, and listen to me too. Well—

"The Chief thought a good deal of your mother, Tom," Raeburn said. "And he didn't know she was dead. I suppose she was the first woman he would think of in trouble. He and Marge's father had been foremen together in the water department thirty years ago; he was the one man she could trust and tell her troubles to."

"Troubles?" Tom asked.

"Oh, little things, Tom. She didn't bring her big trouble to him, or to anyone. But when it was in the papers, he looked her up."

Tom Drury shrank back. "It was in the papers?" he muttered.

"Yes. I've forgotten—some man who fooled her. Made her believe she was married to him—all that, you know. She wanted to die, and the Chief told me that she would if he didn't send her away from people. I didn't know what he did about it, but now I figure that he sent her up here to your mother. You know how the Chief is—does things first and finds out about them afterward. But it's turned out all right. There's nothing against Marge Flood but the—the idea—what people think. It wasn't her fault."

"That man didn't marry her?" Tom Drury asked slowly.

"Didn't intend to, Tom."

Tom jumped to his feet, and his bench went clattering to the floor. "I'm going in to Los Angeles, Raeburn," he cried. "I don't care who he is or where I find him—"

Raeburn put out a hand. "Sit down, Tom. I know how you feel—I felt that way myself. But while this fellow was waiting trial—for the whole business, you understand—and was out on bail, he and some others were driving in from a beach resort and their car was hit on an interurban crossing. Marge don't know that."

"You mean the man was—"

"That's what I mean."

I've told you why they call me Crazy Roger Nicklin, and I don't care. Sitting there in my shack that night, I said to Tom Drury and Raeburn: "It was God Almighty laid His heavy hand on that beast, as I do solemnly believe. Amen!"

The engineer said: "Maybe so, Uncle Nick. I've told you all I know, though I didn't want to do it."

"Thanks, Raeburn," Tom replied in a hoarse voice, and he got up and left the cabin, and I didn't see him again for several days.

Well, we had Marge's pitiful story, but nothing about the woman Drury married. I felt, watching her so much, that I could have made up her history without missing it far. This I did hear: a driver for the Borax Company told me that she'd been through Soda Lake the winter before with a party from Goldfield, and that some one had mentioned how much money Mort Drury had. We figured that she'd probably written him—maybe met him on some of his buying-trips to Los Angeles—

and made up her mind to marry him. Well, she married him, anyway, but I didn't tell Tom nor anyone else what I'd heard. Tom was having trouble enough as it was, because he'd guessed right about the way That Woman would treat Marge.

ABOUT three months after the two women came, I caught a chipmunk over south of the Pah-Ute country and brought it down for Marge's baby. Tom and I were calling him Little Pal by this time, and the name fitted. I rigged up a box for the chipmunk and hung a wheel in it made out of wire mesh and took it across to Drury's place. The store and his little mud house were the only things there, with my shack two miles northwest and old man Peet's ranch and windmills five miles south. That was Soda Lake, and even that wasn't a lake—only a sink of salts that would blind you if you stared at it for two minutes. Prospectors and a few sheep-men in the spring, and cattle-hands, and parties going through overland in automobiles, and the construction gangs of the big projects—these were Mort Drury's customers; and if he'd only had his store, he'd have starved to death single-handed. But he ran cattle, and he sold liquor,—blind-pigged it, you understand,—and he had a mining property or two and a ranch up in Owens Valley and so on. He was like me—couldn't get away from the desert at all, to stay. Besides, I think he may have been miserly too, awhile back.

The day I went down with the chipmunk in his box I saw Little Pal sitting up on a high-chair looking out of the store window, so I said to myself that I'd just still-hunt him and give him a surprise. That way I came on without any noise, and I was about to slide the cage in, when I heard Marge crying and That Woman speaking. I put the chipmunk down.

"So you thought you'd come up and blab on me, did you?" Drury's wife was saying. "You made a mess of it with one man; then cocked your eye on another one. You dirty—"

What she said would have made any woman cringe. Marge broke in: "I didn't know you would come here—how could I? And don't think that I can ever dare care for another man, or let him care for me. If Tom—"

"Tom?" That Woman screamed; and then she laughed. "Tom! Tom Drury wouldn't touch you with a long stick, for what you are! It's my husband you've got your heart set on. Do you suppose I'm a blind fool?"

Marge whimpered like an animal in agony. "Oh," she moaned, "oh, how could you!"

That Woman of Drury's had worked herself up into a passion. She flung something on the counter, and I heard her quick steps on the floor. "You lie!" she shrilled. "You with your pretty face and your little tricks, and with no husband—nothing but this bawling brat!" (That wasn't true—there never was a baby happier and more laughing than Little Pal.) "Don't I see the way you give him your ankles to look at, and how you tantalize him with your thin dresses and your long hair? And the old fool watches—damn you!"

SHE was coming nearer to where I was crouched, but I never would have believed what she tried to do. Marge screamed, and Little Pal cried out, startled, and the next instant I snatched up my box, with the chipmunk jumping from side to side and chittering, as they will when they're frightened. I straightened up to the window, and That Woman had the boy held up in her two hands to throw him out to the ground! With the tail of my eye I saw Tom Drury coming then, and I shoved the cage into the store and laughed at those women.

"Howdy!" I said. "I caught up a squirrel for Little Pal, and here he is."

That Woman gave up the baby, that Marge was snatching at, and looked at me hard as nails, trying to make out how much I'd heard. Then she spun around and went out of the store to the house. Marge clutched the baby to her, trembling like a leaf.

"Here's a piece of good luck!" I said. "Tom Drury back from the range a week ahead of time! We'll get him to name the chipmunk for the boy."

Marge caught her shoulders up and

whipped a hand across her eyes, and when Tom came, she was smiling, as much as she ever smiled, and Little Pal was shaking the side of the cage and cooing to that saucy chipmunk, whirling forty miles an hour in his wire wheel.

"Hello, Uncle Nick!" Tom Drury says, swinging off his gray. "Hello, Little Pal! What's all this—a chipmunk? Well, can you beat that!" And to Marge he said, steady and quiet, the way he always was with her: "Good morning, Marge Flood. You'd be jealous if you had my appetite. Or are we out of beans?"

Well, that turn in the road was passed, and no one knew but crazy old Uncle Nick Nicklin, who didn't count. That Woman kept to the mud house all day, sulking, I suppose, and Marge and Tom and Little Pal came up to my shack for supper, and I mixed a Mexican omelet for them and poured it into molds of rice and made baking-powder bread, and Tom told us how things were on the south range.

"It's peculiar weather for July," he said. "The stock mill around a good deal, and it's so sultry. What do you think, Uncle Nick?"

"Sandstorm, most likely," I said. "I've noticed the thunderheads over the Tejon the last couple of days. We'll get it this week, I expect."

"Wouldn't be surprised," Tom Drury said.

Marge looked from one to the other of us and over to the bunk where the baby lay, sleeping like an angel. "Are they very bad?" she asked.

"Sometimes, Marge."

"Will it come to-night?"

"Nearer to-morrow night," I said.

She turned to Tom. "Your father is going in to Mohave to-morrow afternoon. He said so this morning before he went down to Mr. Peet's."

Tom laughed. "We'll leave Uncle Nick to protect you from being covered up, Marge Flood."

I thought she started. "Are you going away too, Tom?"

"I've got to take some horses to this end of Walker's Pass to meet the Summers boys. I'll be back in a day or two, though."

Marge shivered a little, but she covered it from him by hustling over to pick up the baby. "We'll be all right," she said. I knew why she was afraid to be left alone at Drury's with That Woman. It wasn't because of sandstorms.

Sure enough, old Mort Drury pulled out the next afternoon on the down trip of the Borax Company's stage, and Tom went north with five head of cayuses for Summers. I dropped in at the store after supper and bought a square of tobacco and hemmed and hawed around a little, but everything was quiet, and I told Marge good night and nodded to That Woman, and started home. Doggone it if my feet didn't drag, too! I felt drawn back to Marge, some way. But I said: "Pshaw! a sandstorm isn't going to touch them in that mud house, and Marge can take care of herself. You're a fool, Roger Nicklin!" When I turned into my own door, I bolted it and dropped the bar across and fastened down all the windows, because the first breath of the big wind was stirring sand against the clapboards and moaning in the chinks.

IT was long before I had the rest of the story, but I could piece it out from what I heard, knowing the desert, in calm and wind, in cold of winter and heat of summer, as I do know it. So you'll understand my telling about it just as if I'd been there, as I wished for a while that I had been—poor old crazy Roger Nicklin—to do what I could. I wasn't needed, though, I think, with God himself operating the plan. No, I had my place in the thing, and He knew it and kept me there, which I do solemnly believe and declare, praise God. Amen!

Well, that night Drury's woman went at poor Marge again, and Marge stood as much as she could, and then she reminded the other of something. The wind was howling good by this time, whirling fine sand in through the cracks, and shaking loose shingles on the roof, and bowing the rafters with fury. The outside door sprung loose and flew open with a crash, and before Marge knew what That Woman was about, she had snatched up Little Pal and pitched him

into the raging night. Marge flew at her, but she was too late, and she leaped for the porch and gathered up the boy.

That Woman was quick and strong. She managed to swing the door shut again, and Marge, deathly frightened, found herself outside it, trembling and beating against it uselessly. The wind tore at her, and the door was barred; so she made her way to the store. That was locked tight—Tom had seen to that before he left. She sat there a few minutes on the porch, trying to hush the baby; then she made up her mind to come to my shack. And she started.

Of course she couldn't make it. Blown sand is as bad as a blizzard to be out in, from what I've read of blizzards, except for the cold, and that's made up by the heat and the suffocation and the stinging blasts of grit. I've had my rough old hands and face left raw by one of those storms, and Marge's face was tender, and her hands, clutching the baby to her, were soft. What she suffered from that pain alone no one will ever know, nor want to, if they're wise!

She struck out, feeling certain she was on the right course; but going wrong, as she must. After she'd covered quite a distance, she began to realize that she was lost, for there was no sign of my shack or of anything at all. She went on her knees then, for a while, and down there with less of her height exposed to that strong wind, she could breathe easier. But she couldn't carry the baby. So she tried it again standing up. She was soon tired, naturally, and forced to rest. She doesn't know how long she traveled, sometimes believing that she was near my place, and again sure she was back at the store once more, and then deciding that she was doomed to die out there—when she saw a light!

I know what it was—it was old man Peet's, five miles south of the Lake. It must have taken Marge two hours or more to make that distance. She was heartened up by the sight, because even if it was the store and Drury's, she knew she could crawl into some sort of shelter until morning. But suddenly the light went out. Of course! Old man Peet had gone to bed. He always went to bed by nine o'clock, the doddering old simpleton!

No one can tell how near Marge was to Peet's place when she passed it; but pass it she did, and kept going on. Sometimes she would sit down to rest, and Little Pal would stir, and the sand would begin mounting against her and threatening to bury them there together, and she'd get up again. Then she began to be thirsty—and so tired; and bewildered, and her lungs full of dust, and her nostrils stopped, and gasping through her open mouth, but always holding a sort of way forward, all that long night through.

THE big storm lasted about eighteen hours. I remember it well because it was at its height, about eight or nine the next morning, when my roof went off *bumpety-bump!* And then a little later, even above the noise of the wind, I heard a splintering *boom* and knew that my barn was gone. Drury's store went over, and his roof was ripped off too, and it was about then that Tom Drury reached the place, having been frightened for Marge and the boy and having corralled his cayuses and returned as hard as he could drive. He asked That Woman two questions and then rode for me.

We took up the search in the very worst of the storm; so of course it was only just blind, foolish wandering about, with our hearts sinking with every foot covered, and no more sense to it all than if we'd stayed and waited for the storm to pass—which we couldn't do, certainly! Well, Tom finally went one way and I another. There were no tracks,—in that wind!—and the only thing we could figure was that Marge couldn't go against the storm. So we started more or less east. After Tom left me, he thought he saw something, and he climbed off his gray to look. It was only a gunnybag blown against the sagebrush. He pulled at it, then turned toward his gray, disappointed, when the gunnybag tore loose and whirled up against the gray's head. He snorted, jerked the reins from Tom's numb fingers and ran. The canteen was on the saddle!

Tom went on, figuring to get a horse

and water at Peet's, but before he reached there he imagined he saw a shadow or a track or something, and he sheered off east again, and left Peet's place on the right. He wouldn't go back, because he could strike Fox Wells or the Indian Bowl easier, he thought. And so there he was, searching for Marge and the baby, and *no water!* It doesn't sound reasonable, but when a man is looking for a girl he cares about, expecting to find her any minute and hustle her back—at any rate, reasonable or not, it is what happened.

I kept going north of east, zigzagging back and forth and calling once in a while, but I was finally convinced I'd get nothing that way, and at noon, when the storm was blowing itself out, I started back. I made Drury's at two o'clock, and the old man was there—he'd been frightened back as Tom had, but was delayed—in a perfect storming fury at That Woman because she had let Marge and the baby go. She had lied to him, of course, about Marge, but I didn't figure it was any time to be stirring up more trouble, and I let the lies stand for then. The old man took the little mule-team out and put them in the light spring wagon, loaded a small keg of water on the dash, took some whisky and food and climbed up to the seat. That Woman followed him.

"I'm going too," she said. "I'm afraid."

Mort looked at her, and he looked at what was left of the store, lying in a scattered heap there by the house, and he looked across Soda Lake to where his roof and mine were strung out over three miles of glare, and he shrugged his shoulders. "All right," he said. "Come on."

"Which way, Mort?" I asked.

"You tried the east?"

"About six or seven miles—yes."

"She wouldn't cover more than that. And Tom went east and south? Well, she couldn't go into the teeth of that wind—she isn't west. You go north, and I'll go south."

"All right," I said, "I'll go north—a ways."

They started, and I went back to my shack to get my bottle of whisky, because Mort's carrying his had suggested it, and when I was ready, I saw Tom's gray wandering around with the canteen on the saddle. It was too late then to tell Mort, and anyway I figured Tom could take care of himself. So I caught up the gray and rode him and led one of Mort's saddle-mules, and I went north. I met two of the aqueduct boys, driving towards Mohave, and they said they'd heard that some one had been picked up in the storm by a prospector with a wagon, going to Keeler. It might have been Marge, I thought, so I struck out hopefully and went to Keeler.

I got there that night and found that the prospector had picked up a hobo. So I was forty miles from Drury's—with the gray all in—and God alone knew how far from Marge and Little Pal!

AT about that same time, nine o'clock in the evening, Marge was lying in the lee of a boulder eighteen miles south of Soda Lake, in a faint. How long she had been there—how long she lay there unconscious and near to death—I don't know. The night was one of those infernal, baking, sultry nights that sometimes follow even on the heels of a big blow. The wind was sweeping back westward, bringing all the piled-up heat of the Colorado Desert and heaping that on top of what we had, which was enough! Marge had begun to suffer horribly from thirst at noon; by sundown she was choking and her tongue was swelling. The baby was exhausted, but she had nursed it once or twice and satisfied it, and it was asleep on the sand beside her. I'll never think of her, as long as I live, without thinking of that story in the Good Book of the other castaway and *her* babe—Hagar and little Ishmael, that started out with things against him from the first. There they were, on the desert, with nobody to show them the road, stranded and dying of thirst, the Holy Bible says, "in the way to Shur." Well, my own gentle, scared girl, Marge Flood, nursed her boy and laid him down on the sand to sleep, and then she herself fainted.

She realized, when she came to her senses, that the time to travel was now, if she was ever going to travel at all, because it was cooler; but she had no notion of directions and just fumbled around. She dragged herself a mile or so and laid down again, but couldn't sleep. And morning came and the heat began. . . . . It's an odd thing the way women and children stand up in such cases as this one, but it's true that they'll often bear it better than a strong man. I think it's because they aren't built to struggle so much and so they save themselves and wait, more helpless, but not so likely to die. There was Chittenden and his wife and the eleven-year-old girl, in 1900, southeast of Keeler: Chittenden collapsed, but the other two were found and pulled through. And I recollect in the summer of '96 too—but there's lots of instances.

That's the way Marge Flood was—waiting, and shielding Little Pal with her skirt stretched from the nub of a Joshua tree—when, a bit after noon, Tom found her.

HE was in bad shape. He'd walked probably sixty miles in the twenty-four hours since he'd lost his horse, and he had been without water too, because both Fox Wells and the Indian Bowl were dryer than a hat that year, and he hadn't been able to make any other hole. He caved in, and the two of them lay there in that straight sun—122° in the shade it was that July day!—holding hands and trying to hearten each other with feeble little pats. The baby wakened and cried, and Marge pulled him over and tried to give him food. But she had nothing; her strength and that mothering power were gone. The baby reached up his hands and touched Marge's face, and seemed to beg her, though without crying another whimper, and Marge turned away and prayed.

After Tom had rested awhile he set about helping the others up the bench towards some yuccas and rocks that might give them a little shade. It was a hard pull, but the sight of them nerved him on, and he finally had them lying within a few rods of where those big dikes stand up sheer from the face of the desert. After that he tied his shirt to a yucca-stalk and fell down beside them. He had done all he could. Marge was praying, in feverish whispers.

"Is it a punishment, God?" she said—so Tom told me afterward. "If it is, take me—not Tom and the little fellow! Punish me! I'm the one."

And that way, for minutes, until Tom would reach over and set his fingers on her lips.

Tom crawled nearer to her. "I've loved you ever since I saw you first, Marge Flood," he whispered. "Nothing else matters."

She shrank a little. "I'm a bad woman! You couldn't love me, Tom."

Tom shook his head. "God knows you're not!"

"God?" she queried. "Will God listen to one—like me?"

"Uncle Nick Nicklin says the Plan works, Marge. Pray again—not about punishing—about *love*, girl!"

Marge looked at him, fainting. "I will, Tom," she said, and without speaking, under that baking sun, with his hand in hers and her other one touching the baby's fevered cheek, she prayed about love.

It came on evening. The heat dropped a few points, but it was still raging, and even Marge knew now that the end was near. She was quite at rest, though—Tom with her, the boy sleeping, night coming on, and somewhere above, perhaps, God working out his Plan for them. A shadow fell on her, flicked past and disappeared. She thought it was a dream.

There came another and another. Marge strained her failing senses to make it out. Then she saw a fourth—a fleck in the air, near the earth, that whirred and whistled as it came; that passed above her head, seeming to dash itself against the rock; but that disappeared when she turned to follow it. At last she saw. They were doves—doves stirring in the cool of the evening, circling about and then darting to this great dike under which they three lay.

For a long time she watched the thing, sort of dull. Then she called to Tom, trying to make him understand,

but failing. She laid the baby down, and with strength she did not know she had, she worked her slow way up the rock. Again and again she slipped, but she would catch a breath and then struggle on, her mind fixed, now, on this one purpose. Another dove came whistling by overhead, sheered off when it was near her, circled and flew back, shooting like an arrow into a cleft, or chimney, in the high red bluff beyond. Marge forced herself forward—stumbling, falling, resting, clambering up, tearing her poor white fingers, making a few inches, breathing the name of God—and of Tom and her baby boy.

When she reached that cleft in the rock, she startled up fluttering doves and they whirred toward the top of the cliff. She stretched her hand in. There, in a concavity cut by God's own winds and rains, was a little pool.

MARGE'S divine love was what saved her, because she thought first of those other two, and so she drank but little. The cool water maddened her, but she fought off the madness and saturated a bit of cloth from her clothes and stumbled down to Tom and Little Pal. The fountain God had led her to quickened her heart and gave her new power, and she was able to make two more trips and to bring them enough of the water so that Tom began to recover his strength. Then he took charge, and by dark they were all past death's door and on the way back to life's.

But they were not saved yet. There was but little water and no food. Tom lighted a fire and kept it blazing, and Marge lay pouring out her thanks—and her love for Tom, too. And they talked some, about things, but Marge would not tell what That Woman had done, nor what she had been when Marge had known her before, as she had. No, she sealed her lips on that. So God had to bring That Woman herself, and He did, according to the Plan!

She was driving the little mules toward Tom's fire, panicky at the dark and the desert, and with old Mort Drury lying stretched in the back of the wagon where he had lain for hours. He had been overcome by the heat and the anxiety for Tom and Marge; perhaps he had found out something of That Woman herself, to add to his blow. There he was, at any rate, and his wife driving the little mules and trying to hurry them—not for Mort's sake, but for her own. And the mules switched their tails—knowing well enough who was in the seat behind them!—and came in their own good time.

When That Woman sighted those two and the baby, she would have turned around, with her half-mad cry at them, but the little mules shook their heads and stood fast. Tom came staggering across to the wagon, and he clutched the bed-board to save himself from falling, when he saw his father.

"He's dead!" That Woman shouted. "And so it's Tom now, is it, Missie? You damn'—"

Tom broke in. "Hold your tongue, woman!" Tom broke in, trembling with anger and his weakness. "Is there water here—and food?"

"For her?" That Woman screamed, and she pulled at the reins and struck at the mules. Tom saw the water-butt on the dash, and he reached for it. As he pulled, Drury's wife clutched at his hands. The mules shied and started. Tom exerted all his strength to lift the butt down, and That Woman, seeing he would succeed, sprang up and kicked at it. The cask fell against Tom and knocked him over, and tumbled upside down to the desert beside him, and its precious contents spilled into the greedy, cruel sands and disappeared!

Tom cried out at her, loud, and the mules plunged. The nigh one jerked his mate back against the singletree; they kicked and snorted—and ran! That Woman, half out of her seat, and tugging at the reins now in a cold sweat of terror, lost her balance and fell. . . . . The reins were bound about her wrists and tangled in her hands. The team dragged her half a mile before her dead weight brought them to a stand, shaking with excitement—her dead weight!

TOM DRURY was almost an hour crawling out to where they stood, for the heavy water-butt had hurt him as it went down. He made it at last,

and thought, then, that he was crazed by thirst, for there, propping himself against a wheel beside the woman, was old Mort Drury, revived by the cold night air, and by his whisky and some bread! Tom began to cry for very frailness and for joy.

"She's dead," old Mort Drury whispered. "I had a spell, and the team must have run. Cut loose from her, Tom—and let her lie. We must go on; maybe we can find little Marge."

"Marge is found," Tom said. "Give me a swallow of whisky."

They helped each other then, and somehow got back into the wagon, and Tom told how he had come so far and how he had found Marge. When they reached her and managed somehow to lift her in and placed Little Pal beside her, they gave them both bits of food; and then old Mort Drury leaned close to the girl.

"She knew me—before she died," he said. "She told me about you—how she'd tried to keep you in that place in the city, and how she'd been afraid you'd tell me, and so drove you out in the storm."

Still Marge would not break her silence.

Old Mort Drury burst out in his old way: "Hang it, girl!" he shouted, so that the little mules switched their tails and shied. "Hang it all! Did you know she had a—another husband—in the city?"

Marge questioned him with her eyes. "She told you?"

"Yes. The she-devil!"

Marge Flood reached a hand to his knee, and the other to find Tom's, that hung beside him as he squatted, driving. "That's over now," she said, pleading with them. "She's only a woman, and dead. We must take the body back—Father Drury."

So we all came to know That Woman's name. I cut it myself on a headstone, above the lone grave, here at Soda Lake.

Is there a Plan?

A Psychological Experiment

by Max Rittenberg

THERE was no sound in the laboratory save the faint, thin hiss of the gas-flame under the miniature oven where the tubes of bacteria incubated.

A most ingenious contrivance, this, and as watchful for its master's interests as a sheep-dog. Should the heat inside exceed a required temperature, a thin column of mercury expanded in a by-pass and so diminished the flow of gas. Should the oven cool too far, the mercury would contract and release a fuller flow. The temperature could be almost perfectly controlled.

And Dr. Cuthbert Sterry, F. R. S., had added an extra refinement of which he was modestly proud. It was a tiny lever moving over a scale of Centigrade temperatures, and by adjusting the lever, one could be automatically certain of producing within the oven any degree of heat one desired. This was extremely useful in his delicate bacteriological researches. He had not patented it—for at Oxford, this kind of thing is dubbed "pot-hunting"—but had given it freely to the world of science.

This evening he was quite alone in

the medical wing of the building, concentratedly absorbed in the entering up of his work-diary: such and such experiments put in train; such and such results noted under the immersion-lens of the microscope—the minutely slow march of knowledge. When he had finished his entries, he would lock up his laboratory and return across the Iffley Meadows to his home for the quiet evening's chat with his wife before bedtime.

Throughout the night, the faithful sheep-dog would watch and guard his flock of bacteria.

"I want to talk with yer," said a voice behind his shoulder.

Dr. Sterry had heard no sound of entry. He turned abruptly on his swivel-chair, annoyed at the intrusion—and found a revolver leveled at his middle.

"Don't you make a noise," warned the intruder.

THE appearance of the man produced more scientific interest than fear in Dr. Sterry's mind. A sharp-pointed, twisted nose leaned over to one side of the face, half obscuring a weakly watering eye, as the doctor looked upward at the man. The chin receded markedly, and there was no beard, shaven or unshaven—merely some thin downy straggling hairs. But the body was powerful, like that of an ape.

Dr. Sterry at once summed him up as a mental degenerate from birth—a product of the sins of the fathers rather than of the slums. The accent was cockney, and the Doctor judged him as a common thief out for robbery. Well, there were only a few shillings in his pockets, his watch was merely silver, and there was nothing further in the laboratory likely to fetch a price as valuable metal.

The Doctor himself ran to brain and not muscle. With his own spindly legs and slight frame, he stood no chance in a struggle.

So he answered quietly: "Here is all the money I have, and here is my watch"—placing them on the desk. "Take anything else you fancy; and then I will trouble you to shut the door after you as you leave."

The visitor ignored the offer. "You're workin' with cer-e-bro-spin-al men-in-gi-tis, aren't you?" he asked. The long words were achieved laboriously but correctly.

Dr. Sterry stiffened. This was a most unlooked-for development. "You seem to be well informed," he replied.

"Yes. I'm not common. I've studied things at the libr'ies. So don't you try ter tell no lies ter me. I'm not common."

The Doctor swiftly adjusted his attitude of mind.

"I see now that you are not what I first judged you to be. I think you said that you wished to consult with me. I shall be pleased to give you any information you desire. Be seated."

"THAT'S right." The visitor selected a stool a guarded distance away, by a glass-topped working bench, and leaned his right hand on it, still in firm grasp of his weapon.

"I am quite unarmed," suggested the Doctor.

"I feel more comfortable this way," was the answer.

"As you please. And now—"

"What you think I am?" burst out the man with quite unexpected aggressiveness.

"A mental degenerate," thought Dr. Sterry, but aloud he said: "A student of science, perhaps?"

"A downtrodden toiler. I work in a pickle factory. . . . . But what you think I'm goin' ter be?"

It was merely a rhetorical question. The man clearly wished to soliloquize, and Dr. Sterry let him run on.

"I'm goin' ter be King of the World! I'm goin' ter make everybody tremble at the thought of me. Me an' my friends is goin' ter hold a power of liferdeath over 'em! See?

"Now you got the tools I want. They're somewhere about this labortry. Don't tell me they aint. I know better. I asked questions before I come here. You're workin' with cer-e-bro-spi-nal men-in-gi-tis"—again the careful articulation.

"I want all you got of it. And I want you"—his voice rose menacingly—"ter show me how ter handle it an'

keep it right an' breed it an' make gallons of it myself. See? No lies! I know enough from my readin' at the libr'ies to tell me if you're tryin' ter fool me. I want the straight talk, and that's why I keep the revolver handy. See?"

Dr. Sterry gained time for swift thought by replacing his money in his trouser-pockets and his watch in his waistcoat. This man was undoubtedly a degenerate, but not a mindless animal. There was cunning, purpose and determination in him. He could not be easily tricked into accepting a harmless substitute for the deadly germs now incubating in the oven. He meant to have his way, and the revolver was there to enforce it.

There were terrible potentialities in a few tubes of the bacteria in the hands of a reckless man. The germs could easily be thrown into reservoirs or streams. Even when the man himself was hunted down by the police—that face was too marked in its stigmata for concealment—the tubes would probably have been passed on to his confederates, and he would still be able to wield the power he spoke of.

Dr. Sterry felt that he had indeed a trust to guard. He was no coward; yet a struggle with the man in that deserted building could have only one conclusion—and then the labeled tubes would be found and carried off.

It was a situation of very grave peril, and it must be handled on the scientist's own ground.

"I SUPPOSE it would be useless to appeal to your better feelings?" he suggested.

The voice again broke out into aggressive defiance. "Didn't I tell you I'm a downtrodden toiler? Now I'm goin' ter get even with the world!"

"Very well. There is no help for it. I am forced to carry out your wishes. If you have no objection to my rising, I will proceed to demonstrate to you the correct method of handling bacteria."

"Good. No tricks, mind you." The revolver was still in handling.

The Doctor moved over to a long shelf of books, selected one, and fluttered the leaves until he found the page he wanted.

"If you will read in this textbook," he said, "you will see that the germs of cerebro-spinal meningitis must be bred at body-heat—ninety-eight plus, Fahrenheit. You probably know already, from your studies, that that is the normal heat of the healthy human body."

The visitor cautiously reached for the book with his left hand, and read the passage indicated. It was as stated.

Dr. Sterry moved briskly over to his oven and opened the door.

"Here are my tubes incubating at body-heat. This little device—an improvement of my own," he added with modest pride, as he moved the lever up and down the scale, "—is an automatic arrangement for keeping the heat at any given temperature. Be good enough to set it yourself."

The man had followed him with fascinated interest, his forehead wrinkling as he probed every statement of the scientist's. He took hold of the lever with his apish hand, and moved it gingerly to the 98.5-degree mark on the scale.

"HERE is a test-tube containing the incubating germs," pursued the scientist, his tones warming with the demonstration of his own specialty, as he took out a plain glass tube from its rack in the oven. "This clouded jelly inside, on which the germs are feeding and multiplying, is agar-agar."

"How much?"

"A special jelly made from a certain seaweed and called agar-agar. There are now about a thousand million germs in every cubic centimeter, which is roughly a dozen drops. The tube is plugged with pure sterilized cotton-wool to prevent any foreign germs falling into it from the atmosphere. Take hold of the tube, but I warn you to handle it very carefully! If it should break in your hand, and the broken glass cut you ever so slightly—well, it means death in a few days. Take hold of it."

"No, you hold it. Hold it out, so's I can read the label."

"Certainly."

The man peered at the label in the

neat, clear handwriting of the Doctor, and verified the fact that he was indeed in the presence of cerebro-spinal meningitis.

"The tube is getting cold," suggested Dr. Sterry. "It should be replaced in the oven."

The visitor allowed this. He was clearly beginning to feel uncomfortable. How was he to transport these frail glass test-tubes safely, keeping them warm and free from breakage? This would need considerable advice from the scientist.

Dr. Sterry closed the oven-door on its deadly charges.

"And now," he pursued, "if you will allow me, I will telephone to my wife and tell her that I am unexpectedly detained here."

"No, you don't do that!"

"She will be getting anxious, and may send over for me."

As the man stood hesitant in the face of this argument, the telephone bell on the desk rang sharply.

"That will be my wife."

"Let her ring. No, p'raps you'd better answer it. Just say you're kept late and wont be back for another hour. No, say you're goin' to be kept here all night. Nothin' more, mind you!"

Dr. Sterry moved over to the telephone, followed suspiciously by his jailer.

"Hullo! Is that you, my dear? Cuthbert is speaking. . . . . I am extremely sorry. I have a visitor with me. A young scientist from London. . . . . You wouldn't know him. Quite an unexpected visit. . . . . I am afraid I shall be detained very late—all night, in fact. . . . . Impossible, my dear; I am conducting a most delicate and fascinating psychological experiment. You must really allow me to finish it. . . . . I shall be back for breakfast in the morning. . . . . Good night, my dear, good night."

"What did you mean, a psy-cho-log-ical experiment?"

"Would you have wished me to tell her that a strange man with a revolver was forcing me to disclose the secrets of my work?"

A grunt which might be taken for approval was the answer.

The man was deliberating in the muddy shallows of his intelligence. Presently he asked:

"You got some more of that seaweed stuff?"

The Doctor went over to a shelf and took down a bottle labeled "Agar-agar."

"And when you want to breed more of the germs?"

"That is a very delicate operation. I will demonstrate it to you."

THE Doctor carefully washed his hands at the laboratory basin, and taking a fresh test-tube in his hand, protected by a checked duster, lit an alcohol flame and slowly revolved the tube over its heat. "One must have perfect sterilization," he explained. "Strong heat kills the foreign germs inside."

The slow cooling of the test-tube; the transference to it of some seaweed jelly with a sterilized spatula; the adding of a drop of water with a sterilized hypodermic syringe—in imitation of a drop of germ-fluid, the Doctor explained; the plugging of the tube with a lump of sterilized cotton-wool—all these minutiæ of technique he watched with keen suspicion.

"Now you show me in a book just what you have done here!" he demanded.

"You think that I am deceiving you?"

"Yes I do!"

The Doctor fluttered through several textbooks, and by finding some passages in each, proved in wording and in picture that he had carried out with perfect accuracy the technique of bacteriology.

"I can't make out just what's wrong, but there's somethin' wrong somewheres. You lemme think a minute."

Dr. Sterry waited with polite patience for the thought to clarify. His features were expressionless.

"Psy-cho-log-ical experiment. . . . That's what you said over the 'phone, didn't you?"

"Yes."

The ape-mind moved painfully—a corrugated forehead testifying to its heavings.

"IF you will allow me," suggested the Doctor, "I will tell you just what is worrying you."

"Go on."

"You do not yet know how you are to carry the tubes of bacteria safely away from this laboratory, without breakage or cooling."

"That's right. How *do* I manage it?"

"We have come to the crux. I warned you before of the dangers. Breakage of a tube means death to you. . . . . And if I choose not to tell you of the way to transport them safely, you are helpless."

The voice broke out menacingly: "You just choose!"

The Doctor remained silent.

The man transferred his revolver to his left hand, and with his right took up a heavy empty bottle. "If you don't tell me all I want ter know, I'll beat you ter a jelly!"

"You force me to obey your wishes. Very well, so be it. The transport should be carried out in a manner analogous to the housewife's hay-box."

"How much?"

"Ah, of course, you would not know of that Continental device of the economical household. I will show you."

The scientist produced a small wooden box from a laboratory cupboard, and lined it with asbestos sheeting which he cut to size. "Asbestos is a perfect nonconductor of heat," he explained, "but in order to make assurance doubly sure, I proceed further to line the box with cotton-wool."

He did so, carefully and meticulously, and fitted a test-tube rack inside the padded nest.

"Now we are ready to place the tubes of germs inside, and you can carry them away safely."

"One minute. That aint all. I want them books of yours, an' I want that bottle of seaweed stuff, an' the syringe an' a lot more tubes, an' everythin' you got ter use in breedin' the germs. Now you pack me up a parcel of that lot."

Dr. Sterry reluctantly obeyed.

Finally, he took his hay-box to the incubating oven, and opening it, quickly transferred all the labeled test-tubes to the nest prepared for them. Closing the box, he tied it tightly with string and wrote on the lid: "This side up."

"And now," he said, "I have given you all that you asked. You plan to terrorize the world. Can't I beg of you to reflect? Your plan, if carried out, would kill thousands of men and women; would cripple for life tens of thousands more; they would breed children such as you were—with stunted brains and evil tendencies. And what would you gain? A brief satisfaction of power which would change to a lifetime's hell of remorse!"

The man's answer to this appeal was to produce from a bulging inside pocket a package of stout cord and a ready-prepared gag. Then he laughed out in scorn.

"Psy-cho-log-ical experiment — you meant you were goin' ter try an' persuade me, *me*, to give up an' blubber an' fall on me knees an' pray! I knew it. I'm not common. I've got brains.

"Lie down there while I tie you up tight! See? That's me!"

THE visitor had left with his two bulky parcels, one under each arm. He would soon be at Oxford station; would catch the midnight train for London; and hidden in some slum of the metropolis, would attempt to carry out his horrible scheme of revenge on mankind.

But Dr. Sterry, lying tightly bound and gagged on the laboratory floor, reflected on the situation with philosophic calm.

"It was an interesting psychological experiment," he mused. "I told him a thousand truths, and one small lie by implication. That fitted his mentality.

"I merely let him assume that the Centigrade scale of my oven was the Fahrenheit scale of the book. Ninety-eight degrees Fahrenheit, body-heat; ninety-eight degrees Centigrade, nearly boiling-point. That hour's baking in the oven has killed every single one of those germs.

"My poor fingers! they are all blistered from handling the tubes. Still, a small price to pay, a small price to pay."

Alias Mrs. Blair Coulter

by Henry M. Neely

(Events of the first installments:)

ALICE CREEDON (née Texler) was a woman upon whom Fate had bestowed her superlative best, physically, and her unparalleled worst in the ordinary luck of life. Her father, one of the old aristocratic Philadelphia Texlers, had died early, leaving his widow and his daughter to the trials of genteel poverty. Alice's mother, a weak woman, had given her little care and save for the kindness and friendship of her Uncle Elias, she had grown up, with little attention, to a beautiful womanhood. Then Daniel Creedon, a coarse, powerful and wealthy man, proposed marriage to her just at the time when the family funds had given out and her mother had fallen desperately ill.

Alice married Creedon, and rapidly learned to hate him. She endured him, however, until her mother's death. Then—under threat of exposing some of the ugly facts of his life—she made him agree to leave her for the year of absence necessary to the procuring of a divorce.

Before the year was over, however, Creedon broke his word and returned. Alice fled and hid in a town on Chesapeake Bay under the first name that came into her head—"Mrs. Blair Coulter." There she excited the admiration of Fanshawe, one of a yachting party and a man of the same type as her husband.

She contrived to elude Fanshawe for the time being and found a place to live at a farmhouse on the shore of the Bay. But presently Fanshawe turned up again — landed from the yacht and seeking her out, greeted her as Mrs. Creedon!

FANSHAWE explains that he is a friend of her husband's and has recognized her—says that a young woman on the yacht has also recognized her and has probably carried the story to Creedon. Fanshawe offers to save Alice from Creedon—by taking her away on a cruise in his own yacht.

Fanshawe's intentions are obviously evil. Alice puts him off for a day and telegraphs her friends the Harlowes for the loan of a little yacht, the *Firefly,* which they had offered her.

Next day the *Firefly* arrives in charge of its crew, one Mike Costigan. Slipping aboard her, Alice escapes Fanshawe but runs into a storm—and the *Firefly's* propeller stops!

From this predicament she is rescued by an attractive man who introduces himself as Paul Carroll and who tows her boat into a sheltered, isolated harbor. Next day Carroll sends his man with Michael to telegraph for needed repair-parts for the *Firefly.* In the interim Alice becomes better acquainted with Carroll. She likes him, but his attitude toward her is very peculiar. Soon she is to learn why.

For she is shown a newspaper clipping wherein it is stated that Blair Coulter, a philanthropist and social worker, is suing *Gotham Gossip* for libel because of a story printed in that scandal-mongering sheet to the effect that he has eloped with the wife of a wealthy Philadelphian; this story in *Gotham Gossip,* the paper states further, has caused Miss Monroe, Coulter's fiancée, to break their engagement.

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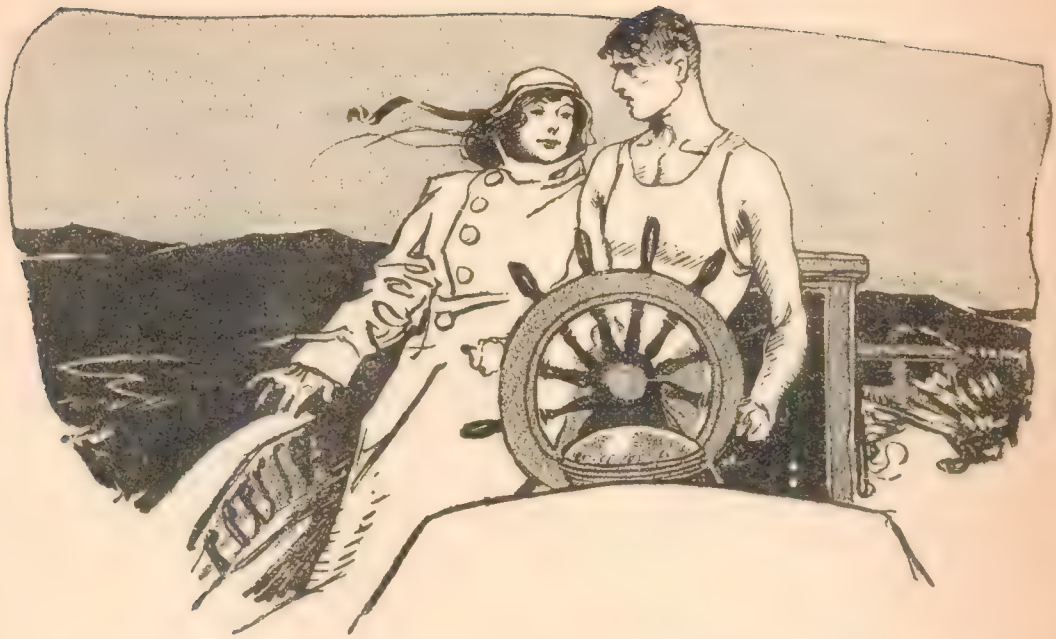


So Blair Coulter is a real man! But worse is to follow, for Carroll confesses that he is himself none other than Blair Coulter, come to find out about this woman masquerading as his wife!

Alice tells Coulter her story, and he pardons her innocent blunder in spite of its devastating consequences. And these grow worse, for Fanshawe meets the two together and instantly puts an evil construction on the fact. And they know that Creedon, learning of Alice's whereabouts through Fanshawe, will come after her.

For this reason, in spite of bad weather, Coulter risks taking Alice to Baltimore in his boat, so as to escape Creedon. But soon after they start, another yacht passes theirs so close as barely to avoid collision. On the deck of this other boat is Creedon and they hear his exclamation of recognition as his eyes fall on Alice and Coulter.

(*The story follows in detail.*)

CHAPTER XVIII

COULTER'S forehead drew together in little wrinkles of pain. A deep red of humiliation suffused his cheeks. He looked at her, and she understood.

"We must go back," she called above the roaring of the squall.

"Yes," he answered. "Now we are running away. We must go back."

She looked out over the raging waters. She tried to see the yacht astern of them, but the deluge grew thicker with every moment, and the black sky enveloped them in a darkness almost of night. Even when a vivid streak of lightning hurtled across the heavens, it seemed only to accentuate the gloom that hung over everything. She could not see clearly even twenty feet from the taffrail.

"You cannot find the entrance," she shouted. "You cannot see to get back."

"No. But it will not be long now. The squall will end as suddenly as it began. Then we will put about."

He turned to his steering again, and she saw that he had altered their course. They were no longer getting the seas broadside. He had headed more to the east and was scudding before it.

"I will hold her this way until it is over," he explained. "Then we must go back, unless"—and he looked at her anxiously—"you want to keep on to Baltimore."

But she shook her head decidedly.

"I do not want to run away," she said. "Flight is an admission of guilt."

She saw that he was relieved at her answer. The deep red slowly faded from his cheeks, and his forehead lost the wrinkles of pain.

Suddenly Andrew, in the bow, shouted something to them, but the wind whipped his words away, and they heard them only as a faint call. The man ran aft to them and pointed over the side.

"Channel buoy!" he shouted. "You're in the channel. I saw a steamer comin' down just before the squall hit."

They made out the dim shadow of the buoy smothered in foam, barely discernible through the driving rain.

"Red or black?" Coulter shouted. It was too far away to distinguish the color.

"Black," Andrew called. "I saw it plain at first."

"Then we're in the channel now," Coulter said. "We'll have to keep on and cut across it. I wonder—"

BUT he stopped abruptly, and she could see his face pale even under its coating of bronze. The air began to vibrate all about them. Alice stood transfixed, wondering what it was, knowing that something was happening—was about to happen. She felt the tremor of her whole body as the pulsating air struck her. And she heard a low, droning hum that grew louder and higher in pitch until it shook the very waters under them. It was the steam whistle of an ocean liner.

Coulter reached for his own whistle, but Andrew's shout stopped him.

"All right," the man called. "She's astern."

Out of the thickness of the driving murk the liner materialized on the instant—a towering, menacing bulk that was appallingly distorted and magnified by the mists. She seemed shapeless, a huge thing of mountain immensity. Alice felt the cabin-trunk tremble and vibrate under her hand as the full power of the great steam whistle shook the whole universe about her.

Shrieking, the big ship came up out of the shadows, slid past astern of them, almost close enough to touch, and headed into the dimness of the deluge on the other side. She saw Coulter work like a madman at his wheel and throttle.

"Hold tight!" he shouted. "Look out for her wash!"

The high sea that she carried after her piled up and almost overwhelmed them. It sucked them about with its resistless drag of the waters and almost dragged them broadside to the wind-driven Bay.

Above the roaring of the gale and the long-drawn shriek of the steam whistle, Alice thought she heard another sound. She looked astern—and the color left her face. She could not speak. Coulter saw her starting eyes.

"What is it?" he asked.

She choked back the great lump in her throat, but she was inarticulate. She could only point in horror.

He turned and looked.

"My God!" he cried. "They struck her! They were following us, and they did not see her."

He heaved at the reverse lever with all his strength and called to Andrew.

"Take the wheel," he ordered. "Keep her in reverse. Go astern to them."

THE little yacht that had almost run them down in the storm was settling fast. She had evidently been too close to escape when the first droning of the steamer's whistle had warned them. She had been struck hard.

Her bow was stove completely in, and her timbers and planks were shattered. She had filled almost instantly; already her decks were awash, and the driving seas rolled over them.

They saw the little, stocky man, terrified, getting a life-ring from the taffrail. But Creedon had lost his head. He had run forward to the staggering bow and now stood there shrieking to them, one great simian arm clutched about the fish-davit, the other gesticulating to them wildly, beckoning them, imploring them to help.

The little yacht settled lower and lurched forward. He clutched with both hands at the fish-davit; but the sudden weight of his huge body tore loose its lashings, and it swung out with him, bending with the strain. Then, its bolts breaking out through the splintered deck, it collapsed.

They saw him reach out madly as he dropped, but a driving sea caught him and rolled over him, and when next he came to the surface, he was ten feet to leeward of the sinking yacht.

Still Alice stood rooted there in horror. She heard Coulter shout something to Andrew and knew that he was madly tearing off the oilskins that enveloped him, but her eyes remained fixed and dazed, staring at that huge form, now so pitifully weak and tiny in the elemental power of resistless seas, first buried from sight under the tons of leaping water, then emerging, struggling, striking out, writhing, smothered in the blown foam. Once she caught sight of the great coarse face turned toward her. In the crucial agony of it, she forgot how she hated the man.

She saw Coulter leap to the railing. Abruptly she realized what it meant. She sprang after him and clutched his arm.

"Don't!" she pleaded. "It's awful, but—don't! You can't!"

But he shook her hand from him.

"He's a human being," he cried; and then, turning to Andrew: "Work over to him," he shouted. "Make fast a life-ring on that light line and throw it to me."

And before she could put out her hand again to stop him, he had sprung over the railing and dived headfirst into the sea.

TO Alice it seemed that she did not breathe at all after he disappeared. His head emerged from the waves many feet away. He shook the salt water from his eyes and settled to a long, strong, swift side-stroke that kept his back to the force of the waters.

She looked ahead of him, but she could not see Creedon. She wondered if he had gone down. She heard Andrew call her.

"Tie the end of that line around that life-ring," he said. "Make the other end fast to that cleat. Tie it tight."

She did not question his authority. She worked quickly, and as she finished, she felt the boat rolling sideways. Andrew had changed their course. He was heading about to come to leeward of Coulter. But it was hard to see in the spray that blew over the face of the water. She was the first to hear a shout, and she looked toward it.

"You have gone too far," she called. "There he is! There they are!"

She saw Coulter's head emerge. She saw that he had Creedon's body firmly gripped in his left hand. Without waiting for Andrew's word, she braced herself and threw the life-ring. It struck within a few feet of him, and he kicked out and grasped it, crooking his arm about it in desperation as another sea rushed at him and tried to tear it loose.

Andrew looked about and saw what she had done.

"Good!" he called. "Pull in slow! Pull in slow! Don't strain him too hard, or he'll lose it."

She saw him bend his weight upon the reverse lever, and the yacht, losing way, fell off broadside into the trough of the seas and rocked drunkenly. But she felt the lifeblood leaping in her veins as she slowly drew in the line and saw that Coulter was almost near enough. Andrew joined her at the railing, the boathook in his hands.

"Steady!" he called.

He caught the hook in the lifeline on the ring and carefully guided it around the stern and into the lee of the yacht. She caught her breath as she looked down. Coulter lay inert in the heaving water. His eyes were closed, his face almost chalk-white. But his left hand still held tenaciously to Creedon's collar, and his right arm was locked about the ring.

Andrew lay flat on his belly on the deck and reaching down, caught the two forms in his hands. Coulter's eyes fluttered open, and he shoved his burden over closer.

"Take him," he said and closed his eyes again.

ANDREW gripped hard into the shoulder of Creedon's coat. By a superhuman effort he got himself on his haunches and heaving back, hauled the great bulk of the man upon the deck. Then he helped his master aboard and sprang at once to his post at the wheel.

Coulter slumped down heavily upon the cabin-trunk. He was struggling to regain the mastery of his faculties, but

he was utterly exhausted. His dulled eyes roved about the yacht until they rested upon the Creedon beast, lying huge and crumpled and horribly inert where Andrew had left him. He stared at the body a moment. Then he looked up into Alice's eyes and smiled.

"Well," he said, "we got him, didn't we? We didn't run away, did we?"

He drew a deep breath and stood erect.

"I'll take him below and work over him," he said. "He isn't dead. He fought me until just a moment before you threw the ring. Hunt the other fellow, Andrew. He passed us out there. He's safely lashed to his life-ring, so he wont sink. But he may be unconscious, and he can drown if his lungs get full of water."

He dragged the body along the deck, and heaving it over his shoulders, staggered with it below. She marveled at such strength.

"Keep your eyes peeled, ma'am, please," Andrew said. "An' I beg your pardon for the way I spoke before."

She smiled at him kindly.

"It was perfectly right, Andrew," she said. "You acted splendidly. Do you think that—that Mr. Creedon will recover?"

"Never fear, ma'am. When my boss says a thing's all right, it's all right. He never makes mistakes, Mr. Coulter don't. Keep your eyes out for that lad in the water, please, ma'am."

He headed over for the direction in which the man would have drifted.

"It's easin' up, ma'am," he said. "Look! It's breakin' away in the west."

She followed his pointing finger and saw that the black cloud overhead was cut off sharp and clean just above the horizon in the west. Beyond it was the bright blue sky, with great shafts of blazing sunlight shooting down and gilding the trees beneath. Already the force of the wind was spent. The seas were calming.

She heard Coulter's voice calling in the cabin.

"He wants you, ma'am," said Andrew. "I'll hunt the lad in the water. You go below to the boss."

She descended to the cabin. She saw Marie her maid, huddled in a terrified heap upon a berth, weeping, hysterical, utterly useless.

CREEDON was lying flat upon his face upon the floor, his arms stretched out above his head. Coulter was straddled over him and was working slowly and steadily, his hands clasped firmly on each side of Creedon's waist. He leaned forward and allowed the weight of his body to rest upon the unconscious man, pressing his hands in at the sides at the same time; then he sat back and removed his weight, paused a moment and then leaned forward again, repeating the process endlessly, indefatigably, with regular, slow rhythm. She glanced at him curiously.

"Artificial respiration," he explained. "Schaefer method. They teach it to the Boy Scouts in the slums where I work. Will you open that second drawer in the buffet and get out my first-aid case?"

She found the box and brought it to him, opening it at his request.

"That little tin box in the corner contains ammonia capsules," he said. "Will you take one out?"

She did so.

"I felt him breathe a moment ago," he explained. "A stimulant will bring him round. Hold that capsule under his nose and crush it between your thumb and finger."

She shuddered in spite of herself as her hand touched the coarse flesh of Creedon's face, but she overcame her repugnance and broke the little pellet. The strong fumes of ammonia filled the cabin.

Coulter worked on, watching his patient carefully.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Here he comes."

She saw Creedon's great bulk heave in a deep sigh. His head moved and rolled over. Coulter continued his rhythmical pumping motion without cessation.

"Now do you mind going out on deck again and helping Andrew find that other fellow?" he asked. "We'll have to get the water out of him as soon as we get him aboard."

She climbed the steps but paused to

look back at him. He was very white, and the lines of his face looked drawn and haggard. He felt her gaze upon him, and looking up, smiled into her eyes; but it was the smile of a man completely worn-out, held up only by the most indomitable will-power. Her heart went out to him.

ALICE was almost blinded by the dazzling sunlight as she stepped out on deck. The sky overhead and to the west was a cloudless blue, clear and serene as though a storm were a thing utterly unknown. But to the east there was that sharp, straight line that edged the squall, and beyond it was the inky black cloud, and under that the driving deluge of rain that curtained all that lay on the other side.

They cruised about anxiously for many minutes, Alice with the binoculars sweeping the whole surface of the Bay, Andrew straining his eyes in every direction. Coulter emerged from the cabin, still in his wet clothes, still looking haggard and spent. He came up to her and took the binoculars from her hand.

"I have made him snug in my bed," he said. "He is asking for you. Do you care to go down to him?"

She drew in a deep breath of determination.

"Yes," she said, "I will go."

She found Creedon lying white and still, his eyes closed, his coarse face drawn into lines of intense suffering. She sat down on the transom opposite him and waited for him to speak, but he lay there white, motionless, suffering.

"Did you want to see me?" she asked.

His little eyes opened and fixed themselves upon her. She braced herself for what was to come. She knew his temper of old. But there was no outburst of vituperation. He gazed at her a long time and then heaved a sigh that shook his whole immense body.

"Yes," he said in a weak voice. "I wanted to see you. That was a damn' fine thing that Coulter did."

She stared at him, scarcely able to believe that she had heard him aright.

"A damn' fine thing," he continued. "But it's a good thing he did it."

He paused to gather more strength.

"It would have made a hell of a racket if I had drowned chasing you two together on his boat—after—after what that dirty sheet in New York printed. Wouldn't it? Eh?"

She nodded mutely. She could not speak. He reached out his great hand and placed in on her knee. She shuddered but did not move.

"But it's all right now," he said with another sigh. "I never believed a word of it. I knew you too well. And I knew—no matter what appearances looked like, no matter if you were down here with him—there was some good reason. I knew you were straight."

He closed his eyes again and lay silent so long that she wondered if he had fallen asleep from weariness. But his eyelids opened heavily.

"I knew you were straight," he repeated. "I knew you could never be crooked."

He tried to turn over toward her, but the effort brought a sharp twinge of agony to his face. He lay back, breathing hard with the pain.

"That's what I came down here for," he said at length, "—so as to be with you if any of those reporters got on your track. They're after you and Coulter. But I'm with you now; we'll say I've been with you all the time."

He closed his eyes again, and she saw that he was too weary to continue long. He made one final effort.

"So, if they come down here before I get on my feet again," he said, "you just tell 'em to go to blazes."

CHAPTER XIX

SHE sat stupefied, waiting for him to speak again, but he did not. The spasmodic breathing that had come of his pain ceased, and his chest began to heave regularly, easily. She moved her knee, and his great arm fell limp and hung from the bed to the floor beside him. He was asleep.

Still she did not move. She heard the excited voices of Coulter and Andrew out on the deck, and she realized dimly that they had come upon the missing man and were getting him aboard. But

she sat there dumbly, her eyes fixed upon the great, coarse face, now white and weak, upon the pillow before her.

Andrew came tumbling down the companionway and entered the stateroom. He glanced at Creedon and understood.

"We've got the other lad, ma'am," he whispered. "He's fit as a fiddle—not even unconscious. But he's knocked about bad, and he's that weak he can't stand. I've come f'r a drop of whisky."

He took a bottle from a corner cabinet and left them. Alice turned again to the sleeping man in front of her. But she shook her head hopelessly. She could not understand it.

She had no idea of the passage of time. The excited voices on deck ceased, and she could tell from the vibration of the boat when the clutch was shoved in forward again and the throttle opened to full speed. But she seemed to have lost interest in everything except the face of the sleeping man.

He had aged perceptibly since she sent him away nearly two years before. He had changed, and the change had not been for the better. His skin was even coarser than of old. There were fine networks of tiny ruptured blood-vessels in the cheeks that gave him a settled hectic flush.

She saw, too, new lines that had never been in his face before. They were deep lines of physical agony. She had seen them when she had first entered the stateroom and had thought them merely the evidences of the temporary injuries he had suffered by his battle with the seas. But now, as he slept, she saw that they were graven deep in his face, that they were the indelible marks of long months of pain.

She saw them and wondered. Creedon had never been sick. He had been a giant of physical strength and endurance. She wondered what had carved those lines so deeply in his bloated face.

A SHADOW fell in the stateroom, and glancing up through the windows, she saw the trees close by on shore. But it seemed of little consequence to her where they were. Her whole world, for the moment, was shut in those four white-enameled walls; all her future lay hidden in the impenetrable features of the man asleep upon the bed.

She felt the vibrations of the engine grow slower as the throttle was closed and then increase as the clutch was put in neutral and the motor ran free. Then came the rasping clatter of the anchor-chain as the hook was let go from the bow; many minutes afterward Andrew came tiptoeing down the companionway.

"We're back in Sillery Bay, ma'am," he whispered. "We're anchored until these here castaways decide what they're goin' to do."

He went forward, and the engine ceased its vibrations entirely. She heard a deep sigh from the bed. Creedon stirred, and his eyes opened.

"Oh," he said, "you here yet? Where are we?"

"In Sillery Bay," she answered. "We have anchored."

"Sillery Bay? Oh, yes. That's where we were bound for when we ran across you out there in that squall. Fanshawe said you were in here. Met him up the Bay."

He eyed her narrowly a moment.

"Nasty beast, that fellow Fanshawe," he observed. "I thought he was a friend of Coulter's. But he didn't act it this morning. Spiteful as the devil, he was."

"Yes," she said. "Mr. Coulter knocked him overboard and ordered him to take his yacht out of here."

Creedon tried to laugh, but a spasm of pain stopped him.

"I see," he said. "What made Coulter do that?"

"Mr. Fanshawe said some insulting things about me—about my being here on Mr. Coulter's boat."

For a long time she felt the little glinting eyes boring into her. She wanted to scream in agony. She wished he would end this unfamiliar pose—would cast aside this calmness and become the raving, raging maniac she knew him to be in a temper. She almost wished he would spring from the bed and strike her. The long suspense of this waiting was straining her nerves to the snapping-point.

"Yes, of course," he said slowly. "Fanshawe would think that sort of thing about it. 'Most anyone would. You've got yourself into a mess, haven't you, Alice?"

She did not answer. She could not. She felt that any defense would be futile.

"Some day, I hope you'll make up your mind to explain it all to me," he continued. "Understand, I don't believe you've been crooked. You haven't, have you?"

"No."

"Weren't even planning to be, were you?"

"No."

"Coulter didn't even suggest such a thing, did he?"

"No."

He heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"I didn't think he would. He aint the kind that does. But what the devil ever induced you to be found on his boat?"

"Dr. Harlowe's boat is hauled out in Gray's Creek getting a new propeller. Mr. Coulter was taking me to Baltimore so that you would not find me here. He was coming back to explain it all to you after I was safely on my way to Philadelphia."

HE smiled grimly.

"Say," he drawled, "that would sure have been some explanation! Did he think I would sit meek and quiet while he talked to me?"

"No."

Creedon looked up at her sharply.

"Oh, I see," he said. "He was going to make me listen whether I wanted to or not, eh? Dear! Dear! I know producers would pay high for the movie-rights to that interview. It would have been worth a thousand feet of film, anyhow. But"—he smiled grimly again—"I guess in the end I would have had to listen. Coulter's a husky brute. And the man don't live who can scare him."

He closed his eyes and seemed about to go to sleep again.

"Say, Alice," he said at length.

"Well?"

"It's a good thing I got down here when I did. Got any idea what a noise all that sort of thing would have made in the newspapers if you two had put it across? Whew! Headlines across three columns, at least! And pictures! Well, I'm here to show you a better way. I'm here to keep you from making any more kinds of a damn' fool out of yourself and everyone else. And I'm going to do it!"

She began to breathe again. He was growing angry. Soon he would be raging. The suspense was almost over.

But he did not rage. He sank back on his pillow again with a quickly caught breath of suffering, and resumed his quiet tone.

"I aint strong enough to tell you all about it just now," he said. "But the outline is this: You are going to quit this divorce idea. Shut up now, damn you! I don't want to have to argue about it. That's why I brought Hardwicke down with me. He's my lawyer. It was his boat we came on. And by the way, remind me to send him a check for that boat as soon as we get home. If I don't, he'll bill me for three times its value. That's his way. He's crooked as a ram's horn, but that makes him useful to me. And shrewd! Say, he can swindle any lawyer in Philadelphia, and if you've ever tried to get ahead of a Philadelphia lawyer, you'll know what that means.

"This was his idea—our coming down here to catch you in a nasty position. And I've got to take my hat off to him. It worked. It don't matter what I think about it—any jury of twelve men would find a verdict against you and Coulter in five minutes with the evidence that Hardwicke and Fanshawe and that little rat Bobbie Arnold, and the Chesapeake hotel register and your loving husband could give."

He paused long enough to see the look of misery in her eyes.

"But I aint going to use it," he went on at length, "unless you make it absolutely necessary."

He raised his arm and pointed a huge, stubby forefinger at her menacingly.

"You drop that idea of yours," he said in even, measured tones. "If you don't, I'll sue you for divorce and name Blair Coulter as co-respondent."

He waited then a long time for her to speak. But her staring eyes were fixed

out of the window above his head, and her white lips were pressed together hard.

"Will you drop it?" he asked more gently.

Slowly she lowered her eyes until they met his. Then she nodded her head.

"Yes," she said dully, "I will not file suit."

"Good! And now please get out of here and let me rest a little while."

She rose and went to the door but stopped as she heard him call her.

"Well?" she asked.

"Don't think that I'm going to be dirty about this thing," he said. "I aint. Only I have figured out a better way. I'll tell you about it when we get home. But I had to get your promise first about your suing. And I had to fix it so that I could force you to promise. Go on, now. And Alice! Tell that man of Coulter's to bring back that bottle of whisky he took from the cabinet while you both thought I was asleep."

SHE found Andrew and Coulter at the boat-davits, lowering the little outboard motor to the tender in the water. Coulter came up to her with a questioning glance, but he asked her nothing.

"I am going to run up to Gray's Creek and get the *Firefly* in the water," he explained. "We will need her for the night. There isn't room for everybody to sleep on board this boat."

She looked about for Hardwicke but could not see him. Coulter seemed to divine her thoughts.

"We took him up forward and put him to bed in Andrew's berth in the engine-room," he explained. "He began to have chills, so I filled him full of whisky and bundled him in blankets. The motor there is still almost red hot from its running. He will think he is in a Turkish bath in five minutes."

He tried to laugh lightly, but he saw the troubled look in her eyes.

"There's nothing I can do, is there?" he asked.

"Thanks, no—except to give me the whisky. Your other patient is calling for it."

She took the bottle below to the stateroom and placed it, with glasses and water, in easy reach of Creedon's long arms. He lay silent while she was there.

As she mounted the companionway again, she heard the tender starting and got on deck in time to see it sweep around the point and disappear. She sat in a deck-chair and waited, her eyes shut tight to keep out the beauty of the Bay in the soft afternoon light.

She heard below her the clink of a bottle against a glass. She heard it again and again. Soon there were no more clinks. There were, instead, the loud, rasping snores of a sleeping animal. She shuddered and waited.

FIREFLY came around the bend at last, towed by the little tender. They dropped anchor. Coulter and Andrew came over for her.

"Andrew will take you and Marie over to your own boat now," Coulter said. "I think we'll all want to turn in immediately after dinner. It has been a wearing afternoon."

"And you?" she asked.

"Andrew and I will stay here with our guests, of course." He laughed grimly. "It's an odd situation, isn't it? But there's nothing else to do. I hear your husband is asleep."

"I hope it will not keep you awake," she said anxiously. "You will need rest badly. I did not know he slept so boisterously."

He looked up quickly, puzzled. She saw at once what his meaning was, and flushed.

"We — we always — had separate rooms," she explained, and they both laughed uncomfortably.

Creedon continued to snore as Andrew and Marie got the suit-cases up from below and Alice and her maid stowed themselves and their luggage in the little tender. Andrew took them across. Coulter stood at the railing and watched them go, but when Alice mounted to the deck of the *Firefly* and looked for him again, he had disappeared.

NEXT morning the sky was heavily overcast with clouds that threatened rain. Andrew rowed over to her late in the forenoon.

"Mr. Coulter's compliments, ma'am," he said, "and he asks can you be ready to go in half an hour. Mr. Creedon and the other gentleman want to get to Baltimore on Cook's first trip."

"Certainly," she said.

She went below and gave instructions to Marie. She hunted up Michael in his engine-room and gave him a generous present of money and warm words of gratitude for his services. The man wiped away a tear with his grimy arm and mumbled his thanks.

"You tell Dr. Harlowe, ma'am," he added, "I'll have the *Firefly* at Essington soon's I get a proper wheel on 'er?"

Alice went to her own stateroom and sat down to wait the final summons. When the time came at last, Coulter took them aboard and ran his yacht up to the wharf at Cook's place. Hardwicke and Marie disembarked at once and hurried up the road. Creedon swung himself cumbrously to the dock and stood looking up at Coulter on the deck. His face was ghastly white; the tiny ruptured blood-vessels glared redly against the chalklike background; the deep lines of that settled pain were graven deeper, and his lips were drawn with suffering.

"Good-by, Coulter," he said. Then, flushing darkly, he added: "Much obliged!"

He turned and walked to the inshore end of the wharf.

"Better not be too long, Alice," he called back. "The bus leaves soon."

SHE was alone with Blair Coulter on deck. She had steeled herself with all her fortitude for this final moment. She had thought of many things that she would say to him. She would tell him how deeply grateful she was for the things he had done; she would tell him how much she valued the tactful friendship that had refrained from asking questions since her interview with her husband in the little stateroom. And she would close with a conventionally polite phrase, such as, "You must come to see us when you get to Philadelphia," or "I hope we shall meet again soon," or something of that kind.

But, suddenly, as their eyes met there alone on the deck, all the words fled from her. She looked down deep through his own eyes to his soul and she saw there the things that she knew he saw in her soul—the things they did not dare say to each other, the things that cried out for expression, that clamored to be heard, but that had to be ruthlessly repressed.

But she saw them in his soul, and she knew that he saw them in hers.

She came to herself with a start. Something that blazed suddenly and recklessly in his eyes seemed to arouse her in an instant. She held out her hand.

"Good-by," she said.

The fire died in his eyes. He too seemed to regain mastery of himself abruptly. He took her hand and bowed over it stiffly, with old-fashioned courtliness. Then he dropped it.

"Good-by," he said.

She did not turn to look back as she hurried up the hill after Creedon.

CHAPTER XX

THE vast Creedon estate with its cold marble mansion tried again to crush Alice in its grip, but it failed. Now nothing could crush her. She was as cold as the marble of the mansion, and as hard.

She came and went as she pleased through the great halls and the cavernous chambers; she walked about the grounds on clear days, and she took long spins through the country in the motor-car, which, with a taciturn, capable chauffeur, she found placed at her disposal.

She saw no one except the Harlowes. To them she told as much as was necessary of the futile flight she had made, and of its ghastly consequences to herself and to others. She had to explain it, for she knew they had read the newspapers. But Mrs. Harlowe's motherly sympathies were with her even before she told it, and Dr. Dick only nodded his head with professional approval and said: "Well, it has built you up—body and brain and nerves. Part of you has grown strong and part callous, and the result is beneficial in both cases. You will be all right now."

Only one thing actively puzzled her in this new living death of hers: that was the attitude of Creedon.

On all that long trip up from the Cook farm, through Baltimore, on the weary train-ride to Philadelphia and then out to their place on the Main Line, Creedon said nothing but the most perfunctory necessities to her. He kept to himself or had talked to Hardwicke.

They dined together on their arrival at the Creedon place, with the evil-eyed old lawyer there to make personalities avoidable; and then, when Hardwicke had gone, Creedon dismissed the servants and sat staring moodily at her across the table.

"Alice," he said at length, "all you've got to do now is lay low and not try any monkey-shines. The minute you do, I'll make good on my threat about you and Coulter."

He poured himself out a brimming glass of whisky and drank it raw.

"I aint going to bother you from now on," he said. "I told you I had a plan, and I have. It beats yours. When the time comes, I'll tell you about it. But not before. So you just lay low around here and keep your mouth shut, and it'll all come out better than it would by your fool divorce scheme."

He rose from his chair, and that pang of physical pain shot across the deeply graven lines in his face.

"That's all," he said. "You might as well make up your mind to it, or it'll be worse for you and Coulter."

She did not deign to reply. Her eyes blazed as they watched his huge back disappear through the doorway, but she said nothing.

SHE had not seen Creedon since that time. Through the months of the summer and well into fall, they lived in the same house, but not once did she see his coarse face nor hear the sound of his bellowing voice. She wondered whether he really occupied the rooms that he had taken in another wing. She met his manservant several times in the hallways and asked if his master were at home, and each time the answer had been a surly "Yes ma'am," with an expression so uncommunicative that she had forborne to question further.

So she lived her own life and wondered about the life of the man whose name she was still forced to bear. She went across the road to the Harlowe's to dinner one night and Dr. Dick said:

"Anybody sick at your house? I saw Dr. Kernan's automobile come out of there awhile ago with the doctor in it."

"Dr. Kernan? Who is he?"

"Kernan's one of the big guns of the profession. Specialist with a world-wide reputation. He wont take anything but the most complicated cases. That's why I wondered whether you had trouble over there, or whether he was making a social call."

"He may have been calling on Mr. Creedon. I don't know."

Dr. Dick made a wry face.

"Hardly," he said. "Mr. Creedon may be a most estimable man, but he isn't the kind that Kernan gets chummy with."

She herself saw Dr. Kernan's automobile sweep up the drive the next afternoon. Creedon's manservant at once went down to help the visitor alight. He had been waiting for him—expecting him. She wondered.

She went out on her balcony and paced up and down in the crisp air. After an hour Dr. Kernan reëntered his automobile and drove away. A few minutes later she heard a knock at her door, and opening it, she found Creedon's manservant.

"Mr. Creedon asks if he may see you at once, ma'am," he said, keeping his hostile eyes averted.

"Certainly. Ask him to come here."

"Beg pardon, ma'am. Mr. Creedon is ill in bed."

She followed the servant through the halls to the wing which she had never before entered—the wing in which her husband had lived since their return from Maryland. The servant showed her into the dressing-room and knocked lightly at the bedroom door. He entered in response to a faint call from within and closed the door.

She waited until he came for her. Then, scarcely knowing what to expect, she walked through the door that he held open for her. He went out and closed it after him noiselessly. She was alone with Creedon.

BUT her first glance at the white, shrunken figure on the bed showed her that there would be no such unpleasant scene as she had half feared. She felt a distinct sensation of shock—almost of pity—as her eyes grew accustomed to the dim light and she detected the ravages that disease had made upon his huge frame. The skin was withered and shrunken upon the cheek-bones; the little pig-eyes seemed almost starting from his head; and the lips were white and bloodless and distorted with the drawn lines of agony.

"I did not know you had—" she began, but he raised a weak hand and stopped her. He pointed to a chair.

"You needn't bother to say polite things," he said. "Sit down."

She took the chair and waited patiently, wonderingly. At length he heaved himself into a more comfortable position and lay with his open eyes staring straight up at the ceiling.

"I told you I'd tell you about things when the time came," he said. "Well, the time is here. Dr. Kernan has just left to go across for Dr. Harlowe. There's nothing either of them can do now, so Dr. Kernan wont bother about my case any more. Got quite huffy, he did, because I wouldn't tell him the things he wanted to know. So I got him to get Dr. Harlowe. Harlowe's a pretty good friend of yours, aint he?"

She nodded.

"I thought so. So, when he comes, you just tell him he aint expected to do anything except hang around and make everything regular and according to law. That's all. And you've got to promise me right now not to tell him what I'm going to tell you, or else you can march right out of that door without hearing a word from me. Do you promise?"

She stared at him in some uncertainty, but she saw the little eyes glinting at her with all of their old-time malevolence, and so she knew that argument would be useless.

"Very well," she said. "I promise not to tell him."

CREEDON turned his eyes away from her again, satisfied.

"I've been debating with myself for the last three or four days whether I ought to tell you or not," he said. "There really aint any reason why I should. But somehow I thought I'd like you to know. It'll show you what a damn' fool you made of yourself, and that'll be some comfort to me."

He closed his eyes for a long time as though trying to determine the exact words he wanted to use. Finally he opened them again and moistened his lips.

"When I went away from you after that fuss a couple of years ago," he said, "I didn't care a whole lot whether you got a divorce or not. You weren't much use to me, and the scandal couldn't hurt me, with the reputation I had. So I went aboard my yacht and took some friends of mine for a cruise down the coast and through the Panama Canal and on up to Frisco. Great party, it was, too. They wont forget it in a hurry."

"Women?"

"Oh, yes—and some men friends of mine. We broke up in Frisco, and I went on out to Hawaii. That's where I first began to feel these—these pains. Had 'em ever since—worse all the time."

"I noticed it down in Sillery Bay."

"Did you? Yes, they left their marks on my face, I guess. I've spent many a whole night tied up in a knot with the agony bringing the sweat out all over me."

"Couldn't the doctors help you?"

"I didn't let 'em know—that is, I haven't lately. That's what's made old Kernan so huffy. But when they first hit me out there in Hawaii, I didn't know what they were, so I came back to Frisco and got three of the biggest medical sharks there to look me over, one by one.

"They all told me the same thing. It aint pleasant, so I wont go into details. It's a malignant growth inside me, near a vital organ, and they told me that when it touches that organ, I'll have half an hour of hell on earth and then it'll be over, and somebody'll have to plant me in a box.

"One of 'em gave me five years to live, and one of 'em said maybe seven or eight, and one of 'em said I might be

able to make it ten if I was careful. That's one thing they all agreed on—that I had to be careful. And another thing was that I wouldn't live a year if I didn't leave whisky alone.

"I paid 'em their money and went back to the yacht with a bunch of books about my particular kind of ailment, and I cruised for months reading those books. It wasn't very cheerful. As near as I could make out, it was possible for me to nurse myself along for a few years, but even at that, and with the best of care and attention, the pains would grow worse until they would keep me tied in knots all the time. I went back to Frisco and asked the medical sharks about it, and they all said that was right—I was in for all kinds of hell any way I looked at it.

"WELL, it was a pretty hard choice. I've never been much of a hand at diet, and I didn't like the idea a bit. If I was due to croak, I wanted to croak and get it over with. I couldn't see that long ten years of suffering just to make the living harder and the croaking more agony. And yet, when I came to think it over, the idea of suicide didn't look as pretty as at first.

"Don't look at me that way. Of course you'd be shocked at the thought of suicide, but you wait until you feel the kind of pains I was beginning to have, and know they're going to get worse and worse and there aint a chance in the world of ever curing 'em, and it wont sound so bad to you.

"It wasn't the moral end of killing myself that worried me. No. I just got to thinking that I'd like to die without a noise—all that newspaper notoriety, you know, that would follow such a thing with a man in my business position. Suicide would give the newspapers the right to rake up all the scandals they've got on file about me. And I didn't want that. I knew if I just seemed to die a natural death, they'd be decent about it and bury me without red ink.

"So that's what I began to plan for. Morally, it's the same thing, of course, but as I say, I don't give a damn about the morals of it. It's the publicity I'm thinking about.

"So I tried to think of some way I could do it without letting the newspapers loose. It didn't come to me for a long time. Then I remembered what the books and the medical sharks said about whisky killing me inside of a year if I drank much of it.

"That was just what I wanted. I started to bring it on just as quick as I could, because I began to be afraid of the pains I was having. They were awful. I couldn't stand 'em if they got much worse. So I loaded the yacht up with whisky and went off by myself, just cruising nowhere and keeping myself tanked up all the time, day and night.

"I'd read enough in my books to be able to watch the symptoms pretty closely. So the time came when I knew it wouldn't be long. That meant I had to get back home and have a regular doctor to fuss around me until the end. You see, if a man dies without medical attention, they have a coroner's inquest and a post-mortem—and a post-mortem on my carcass would have made them add 'superinduced by acute alcoholism' on the death-certificate. I didn't want that. It would have given the whole thing away. And I began to sort of wish that you wouldn't get that divorce because they'd rake all that up too. So, as I knew the end was close, I wrote you that letter from Frisco and hired a special train to bring me home where I could call a doctor in too late to save me but in time to save my rotten reputation.

"That's all. You got scared at the letter and skipped. What was the matter? Did you think I meant that I wanted you to tie yourself up to me again? Huh! What would I want that for? I aint the kind of man that likes to be tied up to an iceberg. No, I just wanted you to stop things and wait until my plan worked out.

"I found that you had skipped in a panic, and right away I knew you'd do something to spoil the whole thing. I'd worked it out too carefully to have it spoiled that way. So I got a line on where you were and followed you.

"You know the rest. I've been here ever since, guzzling whisky as fast as I could because it helps deaden the pain,

and it's bringing the end along fast. I had to keep fairly sober yesterday and to-day to see Kernan. I wanted to have him just to make it look like we'd tried our best to save me. I told him enough to guide him in his examination, and he up and said frankly that it wasn't worth his while bothering with the case—that it's too late to do anything. So he's going to have Harlowe stand the death-watch and issue a Christian certificate. That's all I wanted you for. Now get out."

SHE started to tell him some of the real sympathy she felt for him, but he stopped her impatiently.

"Get out!" he snapped.

She rose and stood looking down at him, overcoming her repugnance with the thought of his suffering.

"I'd like you to let me help—" she began.

"Damn it!" he cried, his eyes blazing in rage, "I told you to get out, didn't I? Here—François! François!"

He struck the bell on his bedside table, and his manservant opened the door.

"François!" he exclaimed. "Show Mrs. Creedon how to get out of here—quick."

Alice stifled her indignation and swept out of the room, conscious of the keen delight in the malevolent eyes of the servant.

Next morning Alice saw Dr. Dick walk up the long driveway to the house. She called to him from her balcony, and he waved his hat to her as François appeared to escort him to the master's bedchamber. She waited a long time, hoping that Harlowe would ask to see her, but no summons came. Finally she saw him leaving the house and called to him.

"Wait a minute," she cried, and ran down the stairs and out to where he stood under the bare trees.

"Tell me," she said. "Will it be long?"

He shook his head.

"Probably within a week," he answered. "You saw him yesterday, he tells me."

"Yes."

He waited, looking at her keenly. She flushed at the consciousness of his scrutiny but did not tell him the things she knew he was giving her the opportunity to say.

At length he shrugged.

"Very well," he said. "But don't go near him again unless he sends for you. He is in constant agony. He must have suffered excruciating pain toward the end of your interview."

She stared at him with sudden comprehension.

"That is why he ordered me out so brutally and had his man show me out when I would not go!" she exclaimed. "You think the end will come within a week?"

"Yes. And I wish you would go away until it is over. It will be a terrible thing to see. I am almost tempted to forget professional ethics and do as he asks—make the end painless, for it is inevitable. But unfortunately we cannot do that. Civilization has not yet advanced far enough to be altogether humane. So he must go through his awful ordeal—only I hope that you will not be there to see it. Can't you go away?"

But she shook her head bravely.

"I shall stay," she said. "He may want to see me again. I have done little enough for him in life. The least I can do is to ease the end—if he wants me."

THROUGH the days that followed she waited patiently. She found that she could forget her old repugnance for the beast in her pity for what the man was suffering.

He sent for her at last, and she went in to him. The shock that she had experienced on her first sight of his emaciated face was redoubled now. He was wasted away unbelievably. Only his eyes flashed with the fires of life.

He waved her weakly to the chair, and she sat down and waited. For a long time he did not move. Then she saw that his lips were mumbling, and she had to bend over to catch the sound of the words that were spoken in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"I am very—very tired," he said. "It is—is time for me to—to sleep."

"I will go, then, and come again when you have rested," she said.

But his eyes protested.

"Stay—a moment," he whispered, "just a moment."

She waited, leaning over him.

"I sent for you—to ask—ask a favor."

He moved his head until he could look up at her. His broken whisper came to her again.

"Alice, I—I haven't given—given a woman a—a—clean kiss—"

His eyes closed a moment and then fluttered open again.

"Will you—will you—let me kiss you?"

With the tears of great pity welling up in her eyes, she leaned down close to him and felt his hot, dry lips upon her cheeks.

"Thanks," he said. "I must—must sleep. Maybe later—"

She watched his eyes close again and waited for him to say more, but he did not move. She tiptoed over to the door, but as she opened it, she thought she heard him calling her. She paused and looked back.

He had turned over on his side, his face away from her. She listened a long time to hear if he would call again. There was no movement in that figure on the bed—not even the slow rise and fall of the clothes over a man breathing.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured. "He must have been very tired. He is asleep already."

She went out and closed the door softly after her. . . . .

"It's the most amazing thing I ever heard of," Dr. Dick said afterward. "You say he talked to you quite without showing any pain? His fortitude was almost unbelievable. Why, the man must have been in the most excruciating agony. Yet he died right before your eyes and you did not know it. How like Creedon that was!"

CHAPTER XXI

DURING the first days of her widowhood Alice might have been forgiven had she permitted a curve of scorn to settle as a blemish upon her pretty lips. She had seen enough of the falsity and the hypocrisy of human nature to warrant it. But with the first announcement in the newspapers of the death of the modern Crœsus—almost as soon, indeed, as the first reporters dashed madly up the long driveway in their taxicabs—there came to her an event that robbed her position of most of its unpleasantness.

She had graciously and patiently seen the reporters during the early evening. They had come expecting, as usual, to be bodily ejected from the rich man's gates and to get their news as best they could from the neighbors and from the people who came and went at the call of death. But much to their surprise and gratification, they had at once been admitted into the massive entrance-hall, and they fairly gasped in astonishment when the widow herself—a perfect vision of loveliness—had swept down the great stairway and greeted them quite as though they were human beings.

In their astonishment at such decency from the family of a wealthy boor, she seemed to them the most beautiful woman that the mind of man could conceive—the ideal of the artist, the vision of the poet, the living essence of all that romancers desired for their heroines. And so (though they had come fully prepared to delve into that scandal in *Gotham Gossip*) they described her in their papers the next morning. With this woman they could not find it in their hearts to hint at scandal.

They had asked how long Creedon had been sick.

"For nearly two years," she had said. "He went away for a long cruise on his yacht, thinking he would benefit. But the attacks grew worse. So he came home and went down to Chesapeake Bay for a short cruise. We were there together, you know."

One of the reporters had literally pricked up his ears.

"He was with you down there?" he had demanded.

"Yes."

"Wasn't that about the time that—that *Gotham Gossip* printed that article that people said referred to you?"

She had smiled in kindly tolerance.

"That was a ghastly piece of stupid-

ity," she had explained with a winning smile of forgiveness. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Blair Coulter was down there with us on his own yacht. His mother started the libel-suit, not knowing where to find him. But the whole thing was so unfortunate an error that Mr. Coulter stopped the suit rather than involve the friend whose mistake started all the gossip. This friend simply saw Mr. Coulter and me together one day. He did not know that Mr. Creedon was there too. You know how such things grow. We felt that any further action would only involve more unpleasant notoriety for all concerned. So we allowed it to drop entirely. Mr. Creedon was angry, of course, but agreed that that was best."

And another of her wonderful smiles had won them completely. They had left her, profuse in their thanks and vowing that the whole scandalous story should be corrected at great length in their papers the next morning.

ALICE had thought the visits were over for the night and had gone to her room, tired by the strain, to prepare for bed. She heard a motor-car come rushing up the driveway. A few minutes later, a servant knocked at her door, and Marie brought her word that there was a man downstairs to see her.

"Another reporter, I suppose," she sighed wearily. "I must see it through. I must tell him the same lies and make him see it in the same way. It is the least I can do for—for—him. The scandal must have interfered with his work."

She walked slowly down the broad staircase, forcing her lips into the smile which should disarm this latest reporter. She saw a man sitting under the shaded lamp on the great carved table, and she walked toward him through the dim red glow of the light.

He rose as she approached. He seemed very small and very old and very bent. She wondered at such an old man being employed—

Suddenly he moved and something vaguely familiar made her stop short. She stared, and he moved again. She felt the blood pumping madly in her veins. But she knew him.

"Uncle Elias!" she cried. "Oh! Uncle Elias!"

She felt both of his thin arms flung passionately around her, and she heard him blubbering like a child upon her shoulder. She put a hand on each side of his face and pushed him away far enough for her to look at him. He tried to smile at her bravely. But in the light of the lamp, she saw the great teardrops twinkle in the wrinkles of his furrowed cheeks.

"It's all the same," he said, gulping hard. "It's all the same—all the same except Aunt Prudence isn't here."

She tore the collar from about her neck and opened the bosom of her dress. From beneath its folds she drew the tiny golden chain and the locket. She snapped it open. Aunt Prudence smiled out at them, bravely, understandingly.

"All this time," she said, "all this time she has not been away from me. She has lived there on my heart, and you—you have lived in my heart—'way down deep inside it. Oh, Uncle Elias!"

FROM that moment, Uncle Elias took entire charge of her affairs. He blustered and fumed and ordered her about in his snapping, rasping old voice, but all the time his faded eyes twinkled like the eyes of a mischievous schoolboy, and she loved him for it.

He made short work of the evil-visaged servants on the Creedon place. Five minutes after they had all returned from the funeral, he called them about him in the great entrance-hall and informed them that they were to go.

"Mr. Creedon has provided amply for you in his will," he said. "You know best why he thought it necessary to leave you such large amounts. I'm not curious to know. I'm only anxious to see the last one of you get to the devil out of here."

His own big automobile drove out that evening, and followed by a Creedon car with Marie's and Alice's luggage, took them into the city to the old house on Spruce Street.

Alice was installed in the front rooms on the second floor. Uncle Elias had had them brightly papered and furnished for her.

"I've got things pretty well straight-

ened out," said Uncle Elias a little later. "You and I are going away on a long trip."

She started, for she realized quite suddenly that she did not want to go away—at least, not just yet. She did not tell him why. Nor did she actually admit to herself what the reason was. But she knew that, in some way, it had to do with a card that she had come across that day in going over the heaps of condolences that had come from every man or woman who had ever known Creedon.

This card had no word of condolence written on it. It had not even an address. It was engraved quite simply with the words *Mr. Blair Coulter.* That was all.

But somehow, as she had drawn it from its envelope and sat staring at it with glowing eyes, she had sensed all that the sender had meant to convey.

Uncle Elias blustered terribly when she protested against the trip he had planned. And unlike his usual bluster, he became obstinate in this and fumed and swore until at last she had to yield.

THEY left for the West in his special car. He made a great pretense of business on the trip. He explained to her that it would be by no means all pleasure, that they would be forced to stop at unexpected places and start again at perhaps inopportune times.

"You see," he said, "I happen to own most of this road and I'm chairman of the board. It's more or less of an official inspection trip."

Not once in all those days did he mention the name of Blair Coulter. She wondered at it, and finally one day she herself broached the subject.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I read it all. But it's none of my business. You never had any morals anyway."

She blazed at him indignantly.

"Uncle Elias!" she cried.

"Well, you didn't," he countered. "Why, the very first day I ever saw you in my life, you told me yourself you were planning to marry that dago fiddler and that you would have a lover to keep you company while he was away on his concert-tours. You did—you know you did."

"Uncle Elias!"

"Well, now, didn't you?"

But she saw the mischievous twinkle in his eyes, and her indignation died.

She told him the whole story from the beginning. Not once did his keen, searching old eyes leave her face. She flushed hotly at times when she saw how searching they were.

But when she finished, he only nodded.

"Humph," he grunted. "You made a pretty pair of fools out of yourselves, didn't you!"

But she noticed that he became more than usually gentle with her after that. And at last one day he demanded:

"Why don't you write him to come see you? He goes cavorting all over this part of the country looking for places to plant his drunks and hoboes. Write to him."

But she blanched at the thought.

"I couldn't" she declared. "My association with him was so unfortunate—was so painful in its consequences to him—that he cannot want to renew the acquaintance."

He glared at her savagely a moment.

"Piffle!" he snorted, and he rose abruptly and left her.

ALICE noticed that Uncle Elias' attitude toward her changed markedly from that day. He sank into a habit of morose taciturnity that amounted almost to boorishness. Several times she caught the faded old eyes glaring at her from their caverns in his furrowed cheeks, and each time he rose uneasily and left her with a muttered excuse.

But she suspected nothing tangible. She bore with him patiently as his temper became more irascible, and she made no complaints when he formed the habit of hurrying back to their car almost every afternoon and wiring all along the road for an engine to pull them away at once.

But one evening he fumed and swore in vain. There was no motive-power available.

"I'm sorry, sir," the railroad official in the little town apologized. "The best we can do is to hook you on to No. 264. She is due here at nine-forty-five and lays over until ten-fifty."

Alice went with Uncle Elias to the station to make the necessary arrangements when the train arrived.

She watched idly as the weary passengers alighted. She glanced from one to another in the little crowd until her eyes met and were held by a pair of eyes that were looking at her over all the heads near by. Blair Coulter hurried over to her.

"I'm so glad you waited!" he exclaimed. "So glad! I have been following you everywhere. Why have you refused to let me see you?"

She stared at him in speechless astonishment.

"Refused—to—"she gasped, but she could get no further.

"I did not deserve the telegrams you sent," he said reproachfully, "I may have—"

But she held up her hand and stopped him.

"Wait a moment!" she exclaimed. "I think I am beginning to understand."

She looked about the platform and saw Uncle Elias talking to a uniformed official. She called him, and he came over to them, blinking through the flickering electric light at the man beside her.

"Hello!" he said. "Did you call me, Alice? Who is this—"

He stopped within a few feet and stared in consternation.

"Oh!" he gasped. "It's Blair Coulter! Yes—bless my soul, it's Blair Coulter! Why, I—I—didn't—"

But his voice trailed off into an ineffectual muttered whisper as he met Alice's accusing eyes.

"I called you to ask about those telegrams," she said coldly.

He looked up guiltily, and his gaze shifted from one to the other. He was most ill at ease. Finally he laughed and held out his hand cordially to Coulter.

"Come on back to the car," he said, "I'll confess everything."

CHAPTER XXII

UNCLE ELIAS insisted that they walk together down the tracks to the siding on which their car stood. He himself walked with the man with the lantern, not too far ahead to give them light, but not close enough to overhear their conversation.

"There is evidently something I do not understand," Coulter said hesitatingly.

"There is more that I do not understand," she answered. "I know nothing whatever about telegrams. You have had some?"

"Every day for ten days."

"Supposedly from me?"

"The first one was signed 'Alice.' It—it made me glad to see you sign only your first name to me. I am sorry it was not genuine."

"And the others—how were they signed?"

"By your Uncle Elias. But they purported to contain messages from you."

"Messages!" she exclaimed. "What about?"

"About—about my seeing you. He wired me every day that he was trying to persuade you to let me come, but that you would not because of some fancied wrong you had done me."

"He said that I did not want to see you?"

"Yes. Wasn't it true?"

She hesitated a moment.

"Yes," she confessed in a low voice, "in a way. But not really true. I did not think you would want to see me after—after—all that has happened."

She heard him chuckle softly in the darkness.

"I abandoned my work," he said. "I have been following you from town to town all the way across the country. I wired him each time that I was coming, but you had always left, and he sent me messages saying you insisted on leaving so as not to see me. I was almost discouraged."

"And you followed in spite of that?"

He leaned down close to her in the stillness of the night.

"I would have followed you—" he began in a vibrant voice, but the rasping tones of Uncle Elias interrupted.

"Here we are, young people," he called. "Climb aboard. Coulter, you're to travel back home with us. Give my man your luggage-checks, and he will fetch your stuff from the station. Up you go, Alice."

THE old man bustled about nervously, showing Coulter to his quarters, talking at random all the time and very palpably trying to avoid the subject that he knew Alice was waiting to introduce. The old man went in with Coulter to help dispose of the baggage and then came out alone to her.

"It's no use, Alice," he said, shaking an accusing forefinger at her. "You can't keep mad at me, and you needn't try. Why, bless my soul, if an artist painted your picture this minute, he'd call it 'Happiness.'"

She tried again to look reproach at him, but he only cackled in glee.

"Confess it, now," he commanded. "What you really want to do is put those two pretty arms of yours around me and kiss me. Isn't it?"

"No!" she denied. "That is—I don't really want to. But I'll—I'll do it if you make me."

He sat on the arm of her chair and smoothed her hair lovingly.

"Don't make me explain before him," he said, caressingly. "It would embarrass you. Honestly, it would. I've been playing a little game with you two foolish young folks. Why, bless my soul, I've known how things stood from the very first. Blair Coulter came to me the day after Creedon died and told me the whole story. I advised him to see you, but he wouldn't do it. Said he'd ruined your reputation—deceived you and dragged you into a scandal and all that sort of rot. And he wouldn't take a million dollars to intrude on you. He's just as obstinate as you are. But he made me promise to find out how you felt and let him know if there was a chance for him. That's why I brought you on this trip—to have you all to myself so that I could look into your heart. And I saw. And when you declared that you would not send a message to Blair, I concocted my little scheme. I did it so that Blair wouldn't think it was too easy. I made him hustle for you, I can tell you. But it's all right now. He's here, and if he doesn't get you, I'll never speak to either one of you again as long as I live. Go to bed now. It's late."

He kissed her lightly on the cheek and hurried away.

THEY talked with Coulter of his work as they sped the next day through the rolling farm country.

"Oh!" Alice cried. "I think it is splendid! Uncle Elias, you and I will start a branch of the work in Philadelphia as soon as we get home. Wouldn't you like that, Mr. Coulter?"

He moved uneasily.

"Well," he said hesitatingly, "it was not quite—not quite what—I had in mind."

Uncle Elias shot him a keen glance of grim understanding.

"Excuse me!" the old man cried. "I forgot to see the chef about dinner."

And he hurried away.

Coulter laughed uncomfortably, but his deep eyes sought and found hers.

"It was not what I had in mind," he continued. "I want you to help in my work. I want—oh, Alice, you know what I want. I have traveled thousands of miles to find you—to make you realize how helpless I am without you. I need you, dear. My poor people need you. They need you because they need me, and I have not been my real self—cannot be my real self without you."

He came over and stood before her, and she rose, her face white, her heart seeming to stop. He held out his arms.

"Wont you come?" he asked. "Oh, my dear! My dear! Wont you come? Haven't I a chance?"

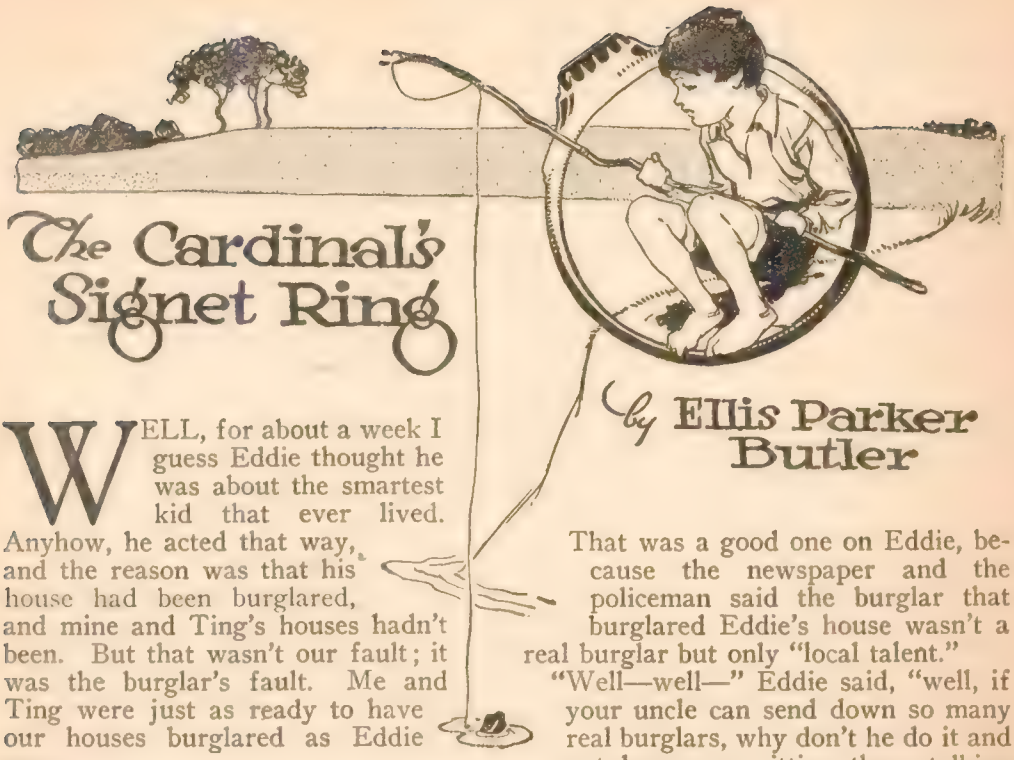
He drew her to him and lifted her face to his.

"Haven't I a chance?" he repeated.

Her face lost its pallor and grew rosy, and her deep eyes smiled alluringly up at him.

"No," she whispered softly as her arm stole around him, "you haven't a chance—to get away!"

HERE ends "Alias Mrs. Blair Coulter." Next month begins "Pleasure Island," a delightful novel by Frank R. Adams, who wrote those BLUE BOOK successes "Taking Care of Sylvia" and "Princess Bill."



The Cardinal's Signet Ring

by Ellis Parker Butler

WELL, for about a week I guess Eddie thought he was about the smartest kid that ever lived. Anyhow, he acted that way, and the reason was that his house had been burglared, and mine and Ting's houses hadn't been. But that wasn't our fault; it was the burglar's fault. Me and Ting were just as ready to have our houses burglared as Eddie was.

So for a couple of days Ting didn't say much, because he thought maybe the burglar would come around and burglar his house, and then he would be as good as Eddie. But the burglar didn't go to any more houses, and me and Ting got pretty sick and tired of hearing Eddie bragging about the burglar climbing right in at his window and almost falling over his bed, and about how—if he had waked up—he would have gone into his father's room and got his father's shotgun and shot the burglar.

We got pretty sick of hearing about the reward Eddie's father had offered, and about how the policeman came to the house and looked at Eddie's bedroom window and everything and wrote it all down.

"Garsh!" Ting said, "it aint nothing to brag about to be burglared! The way you talk you'd think nobody in the world could be burglared but you. If I wanted to, I could write to my uncle in Derlingport, and he'd send down a burglar to burglar my house in a minute. And he'd burglar Georgie's house too. And my uncle would send down a real burglar too."

That was a good one on Eddie, because the newspaper and the policeman said the burglar that burglared Eddie's house wasn't a real burglar but only "local talent."

"Well—well—" Eddie said, "well, if your uncle can send down so many real burglars, why don't he do it and not leave you sitting there talking about what he can do, all the time? I guess I'd rather have one burglar like mine than a million trillion quadrillion burglars that my uncle didn't send down. If your uncle can send down so many burglars, why don't he?"

"Aw! if you say much more about your old burglar I *will* write to my uncle to send some down," Ting said.

"Aw! and if you did, he wouldn't get nothing! What'd he get at your house? I bet he wouldn't get any cardinal's signet ring."

WELL, I guess that made Ting pretty mad. I guess we had heard about all we wanted to hear about that old signet ring; so Ting started to go away, and he said to me:

"Come on! he thinks there aint nothing in the world but that old signet ring. I bet it was brass, anyway."

That made Eddie so mad he began to cry, because I guess he felt like he'd like to lick me and Ting, but he couldn't. He couldn't even lick me, and Ting could lick me with one hand tied behind his back. So, of course, he couldn't even start to lick us both. So he bel-

lered. So Ting told him to shut up, and he didn't, so Ting licked him a little—but not much—only until he said he had enough and that the cardinal's signet ring was brass.

But the cardinal's signet ring wasn't brass, because it said in the newspaper it was gold. Only, it made Ting feel better to make Eddie say it was brass, because if your house hasn't been burglared you feel better if you can lick somebody and say the signet ring was brass.

I guess I knew plenty about that signet ring before the burglar ever got it, because once Eddie told us about it when we were at his house, and he would have showed it to us, only his mother would not let him. It had been in the family from generation unto generation. So when Eddie's mother would not let us see it because her hands were in the dough and boys are too careless, Eddie told us what it was like and said he guessed it was worth a million dollars, or maybe a hundred, anyway, because it was solid gold and had a red, carved stone in it, and the cardinal had given it to his son, and he had given it to his son, and it had always been in the family. So I said:

"Aw! 'taint so! Because cardinals couldn't give anything to their sons; they don't have any sons to give anything to."

"Well, this cardinal gave this ring to his son—so he did!" Eddie said. "This cardinal had a son."

"No, he didn't!" I said. "I guess I know about cardinals. They don't have any sons. They can't. That's the law."

WELL, Eddie didn't know what to say, because he knew I was right, because I read a lot of books and he don't. So, if it hadn't been for Ting, I don't know what we would have done about it. I guess me and Eddie would have been mad at each other forever, or had a fight or something; but Ting had just been listening, and he spoke up.

"Aw!" he said, "that aint nothing to fight about. The cardinal's signet ring could be an heirloom from generation to generation, and the cardinal needn't have any son, either. He could give it to his grandson, couldn't he?"

"Of course he could!" Eddie said. "That's what he did."

"Sure, he did!" said Ting. "That's how all cardinals do. When they want to start an heirloom going, they look around for a son to give it to, and when they see they haven't any sons, they give the heirlooms to their grandsons."

I felt sort of mean because I hadn't thought of that myself, like I ought to have, because I read more books than Ting does; but just then Eddie's mother said there were some hot cookies just out of the oven, and so I forgot to feel mean very long. But anyway, me and Ting knew plenty about the signet ring.

The burglar got plenty of other things from Eddie's house too, but the signet ring is the thing I'm telling about, because it was the signet ring that helped Ting to catch the burglar—that and Mamie Little—only Mamie Little didn't know she helped until I told her, and then she didn't understand any better than she did about the sulphur-bag. I guess nobody will know unless I tell it. So I'll tell it.

YOU see, Mamie Little was my girl—only if anybody said she was, I'd fight him, like any boy would if anybody said anybody was his girl. She sat almost clear across the room from me at school, and she knew I was her beau. So generally we didn't look at each other much, or talk to each other much, because—well, because you are bashful when you are each other's beaus and girls.

So none of the policemen caught Eddie's burglar. Eddie's father printed a reward of fifty dollars in the newspaper, but my father said that whoever caught the burglar wouldn't be half as lucky if he caught him as he would if he ever got fifty dollars out of Eddie's father, because my father would be blessed if he believed Eddie's father had ever seen fifty dollars at one time.

So maybe the policemen knew that. Anyway, they didn't catch the burglar. I guess folks thought he would never be caught, and he never would have been if it hadn't been for me and Ting and Mamie Little. I guess he would never have been caught if Mamie Little had known how to spell *sulphur*. And

that shows that a lot of these teachers are crazy when they think everybody ought to spell everything the same way. They keep scolding all the time, but it is a good thing some girls don't know how to spell everything in the world. If they did, maybe a lot of burglars wouldn't get caught.

Well, me and Ting were mad at Eddie because he was so smart about being burglared, and we wouldn't talk to him or let him play with us. Thursday afternoon, I went past Mamie Little's yard about five o'clock, and she was trying to fix up a couple of old boxes to make a playhouse, and I leaned on the fence and was glad I was there, because nobody else was there to see me. So I said:

"Aw! that's no way to make a playhouse out of boxes!"

"Oh, dear!" she said. "I know it aint. I want this one on top of the other one, but I can't lift it."

"I bet I could lift it!" I said.

"I know you could," she said. "Boys are stronger than girls."

"If you don't tell anybody," I said, "I'll come in and lift it for you."

So I went in and lifted it, and she was glad. She said it made a dandy upstairs for her playhouse, and she said boys were fine, because they were so strong. So I felt pretty good. So she took a hammer and began to nail some nails, to make shelves and things, and I told her girls didn't know how to nail, and she said she knew they didn't. So I took the hammer, and just then I saw Ting coming. So I threw down the hammer mighty quick and said:

"I got to go now. My mother wants me, but if you want me to, I'll come over Saturday and we'll fix up the playhouse nice."

So she did want me to, and I said I'd come, and I felt gladder she was my girl than I had ever felt before, and I dodged behind the lilac bushes and got out of her yard the back way, and Ting did not see me. So that was all right.

WELL, I guess there was diptheria or scarlet fever or something in town then, and anyway, my mother and lots of the kids' mothers made us wear sulphur-bags. That was so we wouldn't catch it, whatever it was. They were little bags about as big as a watch, and there was sulphur in them and aseophidity, or asophedeta, or asofiditty, or whatever way you spell it. It smells pretty rank, but it keeps away whatever you might catch. I guess scarlet fever gets one smell of it and gets as far away as it can. Anyway, that Friday noon was when my mother put one on me for the first time. They sew strings to the bag and tie it around your neck, and you wear it down your collar and keep feeling the front of your shirt because it feels sort of bunchy where it is.

Well, going to school, Ting met me, and he said:

"Say, let's go fishing down the Slough to-morrow."

"I can't, Ting," I said, because I wanted to do what I had said I would do for Mamie Little, only I didn't want to tell Ting that. So I said: "I've got to stay home and work."

"Pshaw!" Ting said, only he said it "Pshawr!" like he always does. "If you can't go, I wont go either! If you can't go, I'm going to stay home and split the wood I ought to split."

"Well, I can't go," I said. So we went into the schoolhouse and into our room. Mamie Little was there. She had just hung up her hat and she was standing by her desk, nearly across the room, and she looked fine—her cheeks were so red and her eyes were kind of sparkly. There were only one or two there besides us. So, while she was standing by her desk, she sort of picked at her dress on her chest a couple of times the way I had been picking at my shirt-front, and I was glad to think she had a sulphur-bag, too, like I had. It was nice to think we both had the same, only she didn't know I had one.

So I whistled a little whistle,—"Wheet!"—and she looked at me. I guess she smiled at me. I felt mighty brave. So I started with the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, pointing at my eye for *I* and rubbing my hands across each other for *h* and I spelled out "I have a," and she nodded her head at each word to show she knew what I was spelling. So I spelled out *sulphur*, because what I wanted to tell her was

"I have a sulphur-bag too," but when I got to *sulph,* she shook her head and I had to begin again, because she couldn't understand.

I was standing up and she was standing up, and she was standing so she looked right at me, and I spelled and spelled. Sometimes I began at the beginning and spelled "I have a sulph" and sometimes I spelled *sulphur* over and over, but she just shook her head each time, and smiled and waited. She was awfully interested, and more and more scholars came in, and pretty soon they were all watching me and trying to spell what I was spelling, but nobody did, I guess.

Mamie Little got awfully interested, and she was mighty eager to find out what I was trying to spell. Then, all at once, I knew why she couldn't tell; it was because she didn't have any sulphur-bag on. So, all at once, I felt mighty cheap! There she was, thinking I had something awfully important I was trying to tell her, and she didn't have a sulphur-bag, and I was making a fool of her before the whole school, because what would she think of me telling her I had a sulphur-bag if she didn't have one? And making such a fuss about it, as if it was something wonderful, like telling her her father was dead, or something.

I felt bashfuler than I had ever felt in my life. My face got as red as beets, and I was hot all over, and ashamed and miserable, and I wished the schoolhouse would catch afire or I had never been born or something. I just slid into my seat and took out a geography and hid in it the best I could. So Mamie Little sat down, and looked at me once or twice, smiling and questioning with her face. I felt bad, I tell you!

THEN all of a sudden, I remembered I was going to her yard the next day, to help her with her playhouse, and I felt worse than ever. The first thing she would want to know would be what I had tried to spell out, and if I told her, she would think I was crazy to make so much fuss about such a thing, and if I did not tell her, she would be mad at me forever and maybe talk about me to the other girls. I couldn't bear to think about, and I couldn't help thinking about it. So, after school, I hurried away as fast as I could, and when Ting caught up with me, I told him I had changed my mind and that I would go fishing with him. So that is how Mamie Little helped catch Eddie's burglar. If it hadn't been for Mamie Little not knowing how to spell *sulphur,* I wouldn't have gone fishing, and Ting wouldn't have gone either, and the burglar wouldn't have been caught.

SO Saturday morning I got in enough wood for all day, and it wasn't much, because it was summer and the kitchen-wood was all I had to get in. Then I hunted up another tin can, because when we get through fishing we always throw the old one into the Slough, because by that time the worms that are left are pretty bad. Sometimes, if the can has been in the sun, they are even worse than that. So I got a new can and went around to the other side of the barn, and the spade was there yet, from the last time I had dug worms; so I dug some more. I had to dig deep, because the weather was getting dry, but after while I had plenty in the can, with crumbled dirt on top of them.

So then I put them on top of the cistern-pump and went upstairs in the barn and got my fish-pole down. It was just like I had left it. It was a good bamboo pole, only the tip was broke and hung loose by the line, and the line was all looped in a tangle at the end of the pole, because that is the way a boy leaves his fish-pole when he gets home. So I guessed I'd untangle the line when I got to the Slough, because just then Ting came into the yard, and he was ready to start. So my mother came to the back door with some sandwiches and things in a box, and I said:

"Aw! I don't want to carry a big box like that! Aw! I just want a couple of sandwiches in my pocket!"

"Georgie!" she said. "You take this box! You'll be glad enough of everything that's in it!"

So I took it, but I knew I didn't want it.

Me and Ting went up over the hill and down past the Cat'lic church to South Riverbank, and we stopped at

the pump on the corner and had a good drink and cooled off our feet in the mud under the pump-spout, because the sidewalks were hot. We went on down past the planing mill and across the railroad track and down the road that was made of sawdust and rattlin's. Sometimes all you could smell was the road, and it smelled like pine when you put kindling in the oven to dry after a rain, and sometimes you could smell the fresh lumber in the sawmill yard—wet and fresh. So then we cut across a big field to the Slough.

THE water in the Slough wasn't high and it wasn't low. Once the Slough ran through to the river at this end, but now it was all filled in with sawdust from the sawmill, and a big conveyor blowpipe kept blowing more sawdust into the Slough from the mill, and all the surface of the Slough was floating sawdust. Then, a little further along, it was water-lily leaves. Then, further along, it was plain Slough for miles and miles and miles.

The water was three or four feet down from the top of the bank, and the bank was covered with pretty good grass, and all along the Slough there was a path worn, because kids and fellows had fished in the Slough ever since there was a Riverbank, and before that the Indians had fished in it, I guess. Everywhere, close to the edge of the bank in the shade of the trees, there were places worn smooth—like an old chair-seat—where fellows had sat and fished for years and years until they were regular fishing-places. When you saw one of them you knew it was a good fishing-place and that there was a bent root, all worn smooth and sometimes almost worn in two, part way down the bank, to rest your feet on. Some of the trees had big roots out over the water that made seats, and the bark was worn off and part of the wood rubbed away because so many had sat there. There were almost ten trillion tin cans in the water, deep down, that fellows had thrown in when they quit fishing and the worms dried up crisp or got mushy.

It was all quiet and still, like a fishing-place should be, except for the *urr-urr* of the mills away off, or the *caw!* *caw!* of crows or, once in a while, somebody knocking the ashes out of a pipe against a root across the Slough, or a little splash when somebody caught a fish. Then everything would be quiet again.

ME and Ting walked along down the path, because we thought we would go as far as we had ever been, or farther, this time.

Once we stopped and ate 'most all of my lunch. It was nine o'clock, but we were mighty hungry. Then we went on.

We got two or three miles down the Slough, and most of the fishing-places were empty there, and I wanted to stop, but Ting said: "Aw! come on! Let's go on down to the point!" So we went. There wasn't anybody there, so we stopped there. I untangled my line, but Ting's was already untangled, so he was the first to spit on his worm and get it into the water. I was second.

The point wasn't much of a point, but you felt more out in the Slough when you were on it. There was a big water-maple at the end of it, with fine roots to sit on, and I sat on some of the roots and fished, and Ting sat on some others and fished. It was good and hot, and the Slough smelled warm and weedy, and we liked it, because that was part of the regular fishing smell. There was just a little ripple, and the corks bobbed up and down gently, and we set our poles among the roots and just leaned back and felt good. Over across the Slough was another point, but more rounded and bigger, and it was green and cool-looking, with grass and three big elms on it, and back in the fields a cow-bell jingled once in a while, and the crows cawed, and the sawmill hummed away off in the distance, and it got hotter and hotter. I watched my cork until it seemed to lose itself in the ripples and my eyes got sleepier and sleepier and the next thing I knew, I woke up and Ting wasn't there! Neither was my cork!

The first thing I did was to give my pole a yank, and out came a jim-dandy goggle-eye sunfish, just about as good as I ever caught. I held him so the stickers wouldn't sting me and got the hook out

of him and strung him on a piece of twine, and I was tying the string to a root so the goggle-eye would be in the water, when somebody down on the Slough a ways, hawked, clearing the tobacco out of his throat, and I looked around and saw Ting coming back to the point, not making any noise. He held up a finger for me to be quiet, and then he climbed out onto the roots of the maple and sat down.

"I caught a dandy goggle-eye, Ting," I whispered.

He leaned over toward me.

"Don't make any noise!" he whispered. "Eddie is over on that point."

I looked and I saw him. It was pretty far across the Slough, and Eddie couldn't hear us if we whispered. He couldn't hear us if we talked out loud. He couldn't hardly hear us unless we shouted. He was sitting close down by the water on an elm-root, fishing, and he was all alone.

"Well, he can't hear us, can he?" I whispered back.

"No," Ting said, and then he climbed over beside me and sat on a root. "There's a man down there," he said, and he pointed.

"I heard him spit," I whispered. I began to feel scary, because there wasn't any use for Ting to be so whispery unless there was something to feel scary at, was there?

"He's got Eddie's father's signet ring," Ting whispered. "Anyway, I guess he's got it. He's got a ring like what Eddie says his father's ring is like. He's fishing, and he's got the ring on his thumb."

WELL, then I knew what Ting had done. While I was asleep, he had sneaked down to see what luck the man was having, and he had seen the ring. I guess the burglar had put it on his thumb to see how it would feel to be wearing a ring like that. That's how I would have done, when I thought nobody was looking, and so would Ting. Anybody would.

"Gee!" I said.

Ting sat awhile with his forehead wrinkled and looked at the Slough, and he was thinking.

"Garsh!" he said, "I'd like to be the one to get that fifty dollars. I wish I knew for certain it is Eddie's father's ring. Fifty dollars is a lot of money. If I had it, I'd put it in the bank."

"What bank?" I asked him. "The Savings Bank or the Riverbank National?"

"I guess maybe I'd put half in one and half in the other," Ting said. "Then if one bank busted, I'd have half left, anyway."

"Well, if one did bust, maybe you'd get some of your money back," I said. "My father had money in a bank once, and it busted, and he got part of it back."

"That's so," Ting said. "If I put in twenty-five and the bank busted, maybe I'd get fifteen of it. That would be forty dollars I'd have, even if the bank did bust. I'd like to have it."

So I said I bet he would like to. I said I bet anybody would like to have forty dollars.

So we sat there awhile, and the crows cawed and the cow-bell jingled, and it was quiet, but we didn't catch any more fish.

"If we hadn't got mad at Eddie he would be over here," Ting said after a while.

"Well, what if he was?" I said.

"Well, he could sneak up and see if that ring is his father's ring, couldn't he?" said Ting.

"Well, then," I said, "why don't you call to him to come over?"

AS soon as I said it I knew it wasn't much to say, because it was two or three miles back to the end of the Slough and four or six miles Eddie would have to go to get around to us, and he wouldn't come anyway because he'd think maybe we wanted to lick him or something. And if we shouted what we wanted him for the burglar would hear us and would get away from there mighty quick. So Ting didn't bother to say anything back. He turned around on the root and started to climb onto the bank and said:

"I'm going over and get Eddie."

"How you going to get him?" I asked.

"I'm going to row over," he said. "You stay here and watch that man, and I'll go over and get Eddie."

Well, I guessed that if he said he would, he'd find some way to row over, whether there was a boat or not, because that was the way Ting was. When he wanted to do anything, he did it. So I looked down the Slough, and I could see the end of a man's fish-pole sticking out over the water and his cork floating, and Ting climbed onto the bank and took his fish-pole and went up the Slough. He had to go pretty far before he found a boat, and the boat he found was not much good. It was an old flatboat, and one end was busted some, and it was water-logged. Ting had to stay away up in one end to keep the busted end out of water and he paddled the best he could with a piece of fence-board. He paddled out to the middle of the Slough and stopped there and pretended to fish awhile, and then he paddled a little nearer Eddie and pretended to fish awhile longer, and then he paddled to shore near where Eddie was and got out of the flatboat and went up to Eddie. For a while they sat together, and I guessed Ting was talking to Eddie about the ring and the fifty dollars and the man, and coaxing Eddie to come to our side of the Slough and see if it was his father's ring the man had on his thumb.

So all the time I kept looking three ways—at Eddie and Ting, and at my cork, and at the end of the man's fish-pole—and all at once when I looked the man's fish-pole wasn't there. It was gone! So I looked harder, but it was gone, no matter how hard I looked. So then I knew Ting would give me a whale of a licking if he came back and found out I had let the man get away while he was fetching Eddie, and I climbed off the root and up the bank and I was just starting to run, to go where the man had been, when I saw him. He was right in the middle of the path near where he had been fishing, and he was bent down with his back toward me, picking up fish, because the string he had had them strung on had broken. He was stringing them again, and as he picked them up, I could see the ring on his thumb.

I didn't know what to do. I guessed he was going away. I thought, "Well, Ting would go up to him and talk to him and keep him here," but I was scared to do that. I didn't know what to talk about to keep him. So I got behind a tree and waited.

PRETTY soon he had all his fish strung again, and then he straightened up and took a chew of tobacco and looked up into a tree that was right there, and I looked up and saw he had put his fish-pole up the tree; so I guessed maybe he fished there pretty often, or was coming back sometime. So then he slouched off. I watched him.

He was big, but he wasn't very old. Maybe he was twenty or thirty. His clothes were pretty old and faded and he looked lazy in the arms and legs; and when he walked, he walked tired. He went down the path a ways, and then he climbed over the fence there was along there, and I went across the path and watched him from behind another tree. It was a plowed field there, and he walked in a furrow clear across the field to the road that was on the other side and climbed over another fence. So I climbed up on my fence and watched to see where he would go. There were three little houses across the road, and he went into the one on the end toward town. So then I guessed that was where he lived, and I got down off my fence and went back to the point.

Ting and Eddie were in the boat, and Ting was paddling it as well as he could, but it was only halfway across. Then, all at once, Ting began to paddle harder. He paddled as hard as he could, and then, I guess, he said something to Eddie, and Eddie began to bail out the boat as fast as he could. Then Eddie began to cry. I could hear him where I was, and Ting swore at him and looked over his shoulder to see how far he had to paddle. Then Ting dropped his paddle-stick and began to bail with his hat like he was crazy. And before I could see it, almost, the old, rotten flatboat took a dive, and Ting and Eddie were in the water. Eddie yelled and went under, but Ting came up right away, spitting water and kicking out with his hands. It was a good thing he was barefoot.

Well, Ting looked all around as soon as he got the water out of his eyes, but he couldn't see Eddie. So he dived for him.

THERE'S one place nobody ever swims, and that is the Slough. All you have to do is to look down into it anywhere and you know why. All you see when you look down is seaweed—tons and oceans of it—all tangled and twisty, and old trees and branches sticking around in it to get caught onto. When the Slough is low, you can't row on it because the seaweed grabs your oars and holds on like it was some mean man trying to drown your boat. It scares you. And all in among the seaweed are tough weeds and water-lily stems and water vines.

Pretty soon Ting came to the top; he didn't have Eddie, but his arms were covered with seaweed. He spit out water and scraped the seaweed off his arms, and then he took his nose in his hand and dived again. That time he got him. He got him by one leg, and he swam for shore, dragging Eddie.

So Ting got him to shore, and I grabbed the leg and pulled Eddie up the bank, and Ting climbed up and sat awhile and blew his nose and panted. Then he got up.

I was crying pretty hard, I guess. So Ting told me to shut up, and he turned Eddie over on his back and began scraping the seaweed off his face, and Eddie's face was scratched a good deal from the rough weeds, and maybe from where I had dragged him up the bank on his face. I thought he was dead, but Ting didn't. He leaned down and listened to Eddie's heart and said all he needed was to be pumped out.

Ting got down on his knees astraddle of Eddie and took Eddie's hands in his and pumped him the way he had heard you ought to pump a drowned person. He pushed Eddie's arms clear back until they touched the ground over his head and then he drew them forward until they touched the ground again, and he kept right at it. Every once in a while Ting would shake his head to shake the water out of his ears, but he went right on pumping. So I stood and blubbered.

WELL, no water pumped out of Eddie. Ting pumped and pumped, but no water came out of Eddie's mouth, and pretty soon Ting stopped and took a couple of deep breaths.

"Garsh!" he said, "I thought he would pump easier than that!"

So he pumped him again a few times and then stopped again. It looked as if it wasn't any use.

"I know what's the matter," Ting said. "We've got to prime him. There aint enough water in him to start unless he's primed. When our cistern is low at home, we have to prime it before the water starts pumping up, and that's what we've got to do."

Well, I guessed that was so. Our cistern-pump was that way too. So I took my bait-can and washed it out good and clean and got a can of water, and I primed Eddie. I poured a little water in Eddie's mouth, and Ting pumped.

"Prime him some more," Ting said.

So I primed him some more. It didn't seem to do any good.

"Aw! prime him a lot!" Ting said; so I poured all the water I had in the can into Eddie's mouth and went and got some more.

"Keep on!" Ting said. "He'll start pretty soon. We've got to get the water pumped out of him."

So I was priming Eddie again, when somebody behind us said:

"What are you doing to that boy?"

I looked around, and Ting looked around. It was the man with the ring on his thumb.

"He's drowned," Ting said, "and we're trying to pump him out."

The man took hold of Ting's shoulder and threw him almost into the fence. He stooped down and grabbed Eddie and threw him across a big maple-root, face down, and began to pump, and pretty soon Eddie began to pump out. The man pumped him pretty dry, and then he put him in the sun and began to rub him good, and after a while Eddie opened his eyes.

EDDIE was pretty much wilted. Me and Ting didn't know how we would ever get him home, but we didn't have to.

"About one more can of water in this kid, and he would have been gone for good," the man said. "Now you help him onto my back, and I'll get him home for you."

We got Eddie onto his back, and Eddie hung around his neck, and the man held Eddie's legs under his arms. He climbed the fence with him that way and started off across the plowed field, and me and Ting went after him. We didn't even think about taking our fish-poles along. We went across the field, and the man stopped at his house and called his mother, and she gave Eddie some whisky in hot water while the man went over to a farmer's house and got a team and wagon. So, while he was gone, Ting said to Eddie:

"Is it?"

He meant the Cardinal's signet ring.

"Yes, it's it," Eddie said, but not very loud. He was pretty much drowned yet.

So we all went back to town in the farmer's wagon—me and Eddie and Ting and the man and the farmer kid that was driving. Ting sat with the farmer kid and talked to him.

"That man saved Eddie's life," Ting said. "Who is he?"

"Him? He's Lazy Joe," the farmer's kid said. "He's Lazy Joe Mulligan. He don't do nothing but fish and loaf."

So then Ting knew who the burglar was.

We drove up to town, and Ting told the farmer kid where to drive, and pretty soon we came to Eddie's house. The man, Lazy Joe Mulligan, looked pretty funny, you bet, when we drove right up to the house he had burglared. He put his hand in his pocket, and when he pulled it out, the ring was off his thumb. So Ting jumped down off the wagon and made a motion for me to, and I did.

"Come on!" he said.

"Where to?"

"Down to Eddie's father's to get that fifty dollars," Ting said. So we went.

WELL, I guess we forgot to tell Eddie's father about Eddie's being drowned and pumped out. We just told him we had the burglar up at his house and that we wanted the fifty dollars, and he rushed out and up the street and got a policeman and hurried to his house. Lazy Joe was there yet, telling Eddie's mother how he had pumped Eddie out, but the farmer kid wasn't there, because Eddie's mother had sent him down to get Eddie's father. She wanted Eddie's father to give Lazy Joe five dollars for pumping Eddie out.

Then me and Ting and Eddie's father and the policeman came in, and Eddie's father was saying, "Officer, arrest him! He's the man that stole my property," while Eddie's mother was saying, "Edward, give him five dollars or something! He's the man that saved your son's life."

"How is that?" asked Eddie's father. "I thought this was the burglar."

"He is the burglar," said Ting. "He's got the cardinal's ring in his pocket right now. I seen it, and Georgie seen it, and Eddie seen it."

Then Lazy Joe didn't know what to say. He didn't deny it. He looked down at the floor. He looked pretty sick. Then he said:

"I'll give everything back."

THAT was how they fixed it. Eddie's father saved fifty-five dollars. He saved the five dollars he ought to have given Lazy Joe for saving Eddie's life, and he saved the fifty dollars he ought to have given Ting. All me and Ting knew next was that we were out on the street and we didn't have anything to show for catching the burglar. All we had was what Eddie's father said before he put us out of the house. What he said was:

"Get out of here, you little rats! Be thankful that you haven't my child's death on your shoulders!"

So the next Saturday I fixed Mamie Little's playhouse, and it was two weeks before me and Ting felt like fishing again, and when we got down to where we had been on the Slough our fish-poles were gone. But the goggle-eye I had caught was still on the string and tied to the root. That was all the good the burglar did me: I got my goggle-eye back. It wasn't much.

But it was something.

Sandy McTeague's Head-Boy

by Maryland Allen

BY the time the mission doctor got through the surf at Torres, on the way to his little hospital at Lagoon on Espíritu Santo in the New Hebrides, it was night. He was more tired than hungry. Four hundred miles in an open boat through islands that all looked alike—that was the run of his district.

Mile upon mile of dazzling white beaches—dazzling, burning sun—stinging, burning salt-water—and the whaleboat held a young mother of Vauna Lava and an old man of Santa Maria. The young mother the Doctor felt he had already saved; she needed only to recuperate in that magical, mysterious place—the white man's hospital. The old man, by taking the law into his own hands, had lost. The Doctor was afraid he had come too late, and though the patient would reach Lagoon alive, he would never dynamite fish again.

It was hurricane weather—low-hanging, sullen, clouds, a heavy, high sea and a black, threatening calm. No fit time for a man to be voyaging in a whaleboat with a handful of black boys not so easy to communicate with even in the best of weather. But the Doctor was about his business—the business of life and death, which is urgent and will not wait. He spoke to Sandy McTeague—Donald's man—on the beach. He would put up for the night—must find a comfortable place for his patients first—and he must be off at dawn, he said in his slow, gentle voice.

With this ultimatum Sandy McTeague returned to the room back of the trading-store.

"Will he stay over, man?" demanded Mrs. Sandy.

McTeague filled his small black pipe. "He must go on at dawn," he said thoughtfully.

"Will he come to see me, man?" piped up little Jean from the couch beside the window.

"Ou, aye, he'll see you, lassie," said Sandy, eying her fondly.

LITTLE Jean had a back. Up to six months before, it had been a perfectly strong, sweet little back. Then Jean began to have headaches. All wrong, that—for a girl of eight. Under the big lamp in the room back of the store, the Doctor made a severe examination of Jean's back.

"Well, it's nothing to cry about, Mrs. Sandy," he drawled. "I can make that all right."

"You can do it right now?" cried Mrs. Sandy.

"Right here?" growled her man.

"What do you want to be so mean for?" demanded the Doctor in his slow, quaint way. "Lagoon's been spoiling for a visit from Jean this month o' Sundays."

"Lagoon?" Mrs. Sandy drew back quite pale.

The Doctor laughed. "Certainly Lagoon," said he. "Three months in my hospital at Lagoon, and Jean's back will be—"

"Cobbled fairly," growled Sandy McTeague.

"You're a liar," drawled the Doctor. "Better than ever. You have the young lady ready at dawn, Mrs. Sandy."

"Dawn?" cried Mrs. Sandy. "Na, Doctor, na! Look at the weather, man —look at God's own ocean and His sky."

"And is God going to injure His own doctor taking one of His own sick children to His own hospital at Lagoon?" retorted the Doctor. "Hoot, woman! Is this your piety?"

"Will you be needin' a knife, now, Doctor?" asked Mrs. Sandy, trying another tack. No knife touched Jean unless she was present, and there was no room for her in the cutter.

"A knife?" The Doctor looked fairly bewildered, and his blue eyes twinkled. "Who said knife? She'll go to bed, Mrs. Sandy, and Miss Bayne will spank her once every day." And Jean laughed in a shrill little pipe like the chirp of a boatswain's whistle.

"She must come along now, Mrs. Sandy," drawled the Doctor more gravely. "It'll be six months before I'm round this way again. It'll be every bit that long before the *Avarua* comes, and Jean can't wait until then. There's nothing serious now, but in six months—I'm sorry, but in six months it may be too late." He looked straight at Sandy McTeague, and the trader's leathery cheeks went a pale tan shade.

"There's really no danger," assured the Doctor. He sighed from sheer fatigue, and loosened his heavy belt of cartridges and placed it on the center-table beneath the lamp. "The glass is down, I know. But those husky boys of mine can lay to the oars plenty and to spare."

"I DON'T like the look o' that head-boy o' yours," growled Sandy McTeague. "I jalouse he's sick already."

The Doctor eyed him thoughtfully. "Let me see that boy," said he.

The boy lay on a mat in Sandy's copra-shed. He was burning with fever—dreadfully ill, as a Kanaka becomes as soon as he is ill at all. The Doctor's head-boy at that moment was the sickest person in the New Hebrides.

The Doctor administered a dose. "Titii, you poor fool," he murmured regretfully. He rose to his feet.

"No more pull in him for a week," he said to Sandy McTeague. "And not a boy will go without him. I'm stuck, Sandy man, I'm stuck."

In gloomy silence they returned to the room back of the store.

"Best take my boys," offered Sandy then.

"Your boys?" cried Mrs. Sandy. She was setting out the tea-things upon the table.

"I'm here for a week without 'em, Missis," explained the Doctor, "and every moment counts." He glanced at yellow-haired Jean asleep on the couch.

"Only your head-boy's sick," objected Mrs. Sandy, returning to the tea-things. "Couldn't you take just one o' his boys?"

"Who's your head-boy, Sandy?" demanded the doctor.

McTeague grinned. "He's Matupi from Malayta."

The Doctor grinned back. He knew that boat-crew was a weakness of the trader's. "Sure," he drawled. "And I've heard something of Matupi."

"Nothin' o' good, I know," snapped Mrs. Sandy.

McTeague grinned again. "She don't like those boys," he said. "They've too much ginger for the woman. There's noan o' your psalm-singin' converts about those boys, sir. That crew's all Solomon Islanders, an' I'll back 'em to pull a boat against any crew in the world. The woman here don't like Matupi, particular since he had the visitors in a big seagoing canoe."

"They looked like cannibals," cried Mrs. Sandy, pouring the tea.

"I jalouse they were," admitted her husband. "I'm in a fair way o' thinkin' Matupi's a cannibal hisself"—which was a base falsehood and libelous of Matupi.

"I've never seen the party with Matupi's birth-lines," went on the trader, "but he says he comes from Malayta, an' so do the rest."

"Bad boys, that lot!" cried Mrs. Sandy, waving them to the table.

"They'll get you there, Doctor," said Sandy McTeague. "On'y don't pay 'em off at Lagoon."

THE Doctor agreed with no misgivings. There was only one boat-crew on Torres beach, and they were the black boys of Sandy McTeague. They had beaten all rivals when they first came to Torres; they still stood ready to meet fresh ones that never presented themselves. The pride McTeague took in them was no more than natural and a good thing for the man. They were his crew—you understand. But for the more timid and peaceful brown dwellers of Torres it was a different matter. Those great, strapping, shiny-eyed boys that formed McTeague's boat-crew had a bad name.

To see Sandy McTeague manage them was, to a stranger, ample confirmation of the rumor, though it made the old hands laugh. They used to say that when Donald's manager at Port Moresby shot it into McTeague, McTeague found relief by shooting it into his black boys. To see him rush in among them, yelling curses, his great fists flying, his feet pounding actively those that were down, to see the way they regarded him, too, when the fray subsided—they never struck back at McTeague—rather justified his remark to the Doctor that there were no "psalm-singin' converts among those boys."

McTeague was a South Sea boat-crew fancier, as many a man north of the line is a fancier of dogs and horses —makes them a special hobby. He chose his boys with a shrewd, critical eye, fed them well, was judicious in the allowance of rum and tobacco, worked them cannily, and let them fight to their heart's content.

"The nearer the simon-pure savage," said McTeague, "the better the boy at the oar."

"I know," he added with a great assumption of humility, the better to conceal his pride, "that Matupi may be just a leetle bit too near. There's not even the faintest drop o' the makin's o' a ceevilized human in him, let alone a Christian. You just watch the eye o' that Matupi once. It's bitter—and keen an' bright as that big knife he carries snug in the small o' his back when he first came here to me. It watches the other lads to see they works; it watches me, too, for rum an' tobacco. But give that eye o' Matupi's a chance, an' it would look for a place on a man to make the blood flow—yes, an' cut a slice off him too. But he just needs discipline," concluded Sandy McTeague. "A good wallop beside the jaw, an' he comes to heel."

MATUPI had entered the service of Sandy McTeague and come to Torres beach under somewhat shady circumstances. Matupi had a past. Of this past Sandy McTeague had got a faint outline. What there was that was fine, almost heroic in fact, had been sedulously dwelt upon and played up at great length. For an instance, when the old *Seven Seas* went to her death: There was just one boat and only two oars were saved—no sail, no water, no food. Matupi left the men to do as best they could and swam to Lifu, miles upon miles, and got help. And he had courage, that Matupi. He'd stand up to any man—bully any dozen men into pulling at oars or pulling at ropes. He'd pull, too.

"There wasn't a lazy bone in the boy's big, hard, black body. Nor a lazy one in anyone's else when he was about," Sandy had said. "It's a grand boy," he declared further. "Come now, give un his fair deserts."

What Sandy McTeague had not been directly told when he first laid eyes on the swaggering, brawny Matupi shouldering in a crowd before Chelten's store at Taritari, he had been really careful not to find out. Matupi was from the place he claimed—Malayta in the Solomons. And here was the sum of what Sandy McTeague was sedulous not to discover: on a journey from Port Moresby to Malayta, Matupi was connected with a transaction of such horrid color that if the thing could have been proved upon him, he would probably have been sent to the penal colony at Choiseul or shot out of hand.

One-Dollar Bill Dahlgren, with his little schooner *Rebecca,* out of Port Moresby for trade, was caught in a hurricane and wrecked somewhere east of Woodlark. Four men got off in a lifeboat—that much is known. And

two rowed into Malayta in that same lifeboat, well nourished and quite reasonably contented, though it was the first landing since the *Rebecca* foundered in the gale something over two weeks before. What Chelten had not told Sandy McTeague, when the Scotch trader first coveted his likely head-boy, was that Matupi had been one of those men who returned so comfortably to Malayta after that dreadful experience.

Chelten had "no use" for Matupi, who had voluntarily entered his employ, and he was afraid to kick him off the beach. He had been looking a long time for just such a chance as McTeague offered—a chance to get Matupi amicably out of his service and away from Taritari.

And so magnificent, blood-stained Matupi had come to be the head-boy of Sandy McTeague's boat-crew, and to lord it swaggeringly on Torres beach.

IT rained a little during the night. The Doctor, sleeping on his own air-mattress in the middle of the store-floor, heard it pounding and chattering upon the corrugated-iron roof above his head. He turned over to sleep again, as a man takes deep draughts of a rare, rich wine he may never taste again. He must get on at dawn. The barometer was down, and a bad un was most likely brewing, but he must get on to Lagoon.

For little Jean it meant the sharp difference between living and dying; for the young mother, just short of that, and for the misinterpreter of laws concerning the dynamiting of fish, a saving of much agony. The chances were so good they would run into Lagoon ahead of the storm, the Doctor determined to take them. But how much he would sleep the next night at sea or the next one at Lagoon it was impossible to divine. He dived back into slumber headfirst, tasting it consciously, sensing it with active delight. A half-hour before dawn Sandy McTeague summoned him to coffee in the back room.

"How's the weather, Sandy McTeague?" drawled the Doctor.

"Much the same, sir," said Sandy. "Here's Jean wakin' up. I've the boys down expectin' you. Shall we get your patients now?"

"Right away." The Doctor snatched down one of the canvas cartridge-belts from against the wall, settled his automatic in the back pocket of his trousers and hurried after McTeague.

They went down to the beach in a gray, threatening dawn. There was a hint of wind in the low-hanging clouds. Rain fell hurriedly, ceased and then rushed down again as if the shower had hastily returned for just a few drops more.

"Doctor," faltered Mrs. Sandy, "my Jean—"

The Doctor regarded her with his steady, good blue eyes. "Are you afraid to trust her to me, Mrs. Sandy?"

"Na, na, Doctor-man, but oh—" And Mrs. Sandy struggled bravely with her tears.

"It's her life, if I take her now," the Doctor whispered. He patted her shoulder and laughed.

"Keep a good heart, woman," he cried. "I'll have her well and back to you in no time—unless she wants to be a trained nurse, and then I'll take her on."

"You've your gun, Doctor?" whispered Sandy. "And it's loaded?"

"You're right, Sandy McTeague," murmured the Doctor. "It isn't now, but it soon will be. I've several rounds of ammunition in my belt."

"It's Matupi you must mind," said Sandy. "Don't fash yourself wi' th' others. Fetch him a thump wi' the butt if his manners are aught but perfect. If it comes to a tight place, sir, remember me words an' shoot the nigger. But there, I've got him trained. Just a thump on the snoot wi' the butt, Doctor—a thump on the snoot wi' the butt."

THEY went out through the reef with a puff of westerly wind and a big drive of rain. Matupi and his boys ran up the sail, and they stood away in style. All that day the wind held, and they tore along. The rain was intermittent; the barometer went no lower. The Doctor's spirits began to soar.

They would reach Lagoon ahead of the storm, and his patients were no worse. Indeed, little Jean was wonderfully cheered. Her head had not felt "so good" for a long time. And so until evening.

Dusk was falling. A black night was almost upon them with a growing gale when, the cutter careening to an unusually high sea, the Doctor's coat went overboard with his watch in the pocket. It was an accident, but not a serious one. The compass was safe enough; and that was the only thing in the boat to be counted a loss—except, perhaps, the gun, which was still empty. There would be no hitting anyone over the "snoot" in his ship, thought the Doctor, drawing the automatic from the back pocket of his trousers—much less "shooting the niggers." Still, he'd load the cannon—it was always best to be prepared. He threw open the chamber and slipped a cartridge from his belt, his wary eyes upon the crew. The shell would not go in. He looked down at his hands then, and tried again. But the shell would not fit into its allotted place in the chamber of the automatic. The Doctor examined the thing closely. It was not for his gun at all. He had taken the wrong belt from the wall back there at Torres. His jaw sagged a trifle, and he bit his underlip.

Something made him glance up suddenly. He caught Matupi's keen gaze fixed full upon him, and he thought better of displaying his anxiety. But the head-boy had remarked the Big White Boss' momentary discomfiture, and the fact that he made up his mind something was *noatu*. He grinned a little, and his bitter, sharp eyes glittered more brightly. He and the other boys had some cold baked fish for supper, and baked *fei*. They ate squatting in the bow, indifferent to the tossing of the little cockleshell of a boat, and calm as if they were on the sand at the back door of the room behind the store on Torres beach. The Doctor fed his patients as comfortably as might be, aft.

The gale strengthened with the night. A hundred times the Doctor, holding little Jean in his arms, thought the cutter would swamp in the heavy seas. But with every strenuous minute McTeague's crack boat-crew proved their master's boast, and they still flew on. At dawn they fed on biscuits soaked in salt-water and baked fish soaked in salt-water, and drank a great deal of water that was fresh. Everything but the few delicacies the Doctor managed, after the second or third attempt, to feed his patients, was soaked in brine. Then he drew out his automatic and regarded it with a feeling akin to loneliness. It was hardly encouraging to know that, in an emergency, he had only his bare fists, even if he did intend to use them solely. Now he would not be able to take Sandy's advice, if it became necessary. Smiling wryly he looked up, met Matupi's watchful gaze—and the black boy laughed.

All day the sky came lower, the wind blew stronger, and the spindrift thickened. In the afternoon the Doctor heard a sound—a low, unending, thunderous roll. He saw the needle of the compass was jammed and that he had been steering blind.

"Matupi, what I hear?" he shouted.

"Sar," roared back Matupi immovably, "breakers, sar."

"You come here," bellowed the Doctor in the vernacular of the beach at Lagoon. "Steer away from those breakers. Where in the name o' God are we, anyhow?"

THE Doctor soon gave up trying to mend the compass. What with looking after little Jean and the young mother, and easing the pain of the breaker of laws, it was not a very easy task. Also, with the knowledge of the wrong cartridges heavy upon him, he watched keenly every move of McTeague's black boys. And they did mightily—let that be said for them. Each man strove as two, and all together. There was nothing more for them to eat. They had expected to reach Lagoon early in the afternoon, and it was near midnight; the Doctor was sure of that, though he was without his watch. He heard breakers again and stared across in the roaring darkness at watchful Matupi. The cutter could not live much longer at the rate things were going.

"What do you make of those break-

ers, Matupi?" he shouted in the language of the beach.

Matupi opened his big mouth. "Get through—" were the only audible words.

"Go on, then," roared the Doctor.

He resigned all to Matupi and squatted down close to the young mother, with little Jean in his arms. God's mercy—if they only could get through. What would become of Mrs. Sandy if they did not? But he had been forced to take the chance. Jean would have died on the couch in the room behind the store.

Matupi's voice rose magnificently, striving with the storm. The cutter careened, shook with a strong convulsion and righted again. The roar of the breakers was close aboard—thunderous, deafening, appalling. The Doctor held little Jean close in his left arm; he reached out with his right and drew the young mother closer, and the poor thing cowered with her chin on his knee and whimpered like a frightened dog. A little way off, the breaker of laws made a moaning that was not from pain.

The cutter rolled again; then it righted more slowly. She struck with a force and violence that drove the Doctor's heart into his mouth and sent him staggering halfway to his feet. Sandy McTeague's black boys went tumbling over the side. A smothering, furious, struggling moment—and they dragged the boat high up on the sand.

The wind roared about them with frightful velocity; the rain poured in streaming torrents whipped furiously by the wind. But the miracle had happened. They had got through. The Doctor drew a fresh breath and set about attempting to devise some slight shelter from the storm.

The black boys were interested in this. They emptied the brackish water from the cask, set it to catch fresh and scooped holes in the beach as further safety against thirst. If any of them knew where they were, they did not undertake to enlighten the Doctor. They helped to overturn the boat and to bestow the wet cargo so as best to weight it against the force of the wind. They worked frolicsomely in the stormy darkness, with sly kicks and blows at each other, and more than one sharp thrust at the breaker of laws who would never dynamite fish again.

The Doctor sent one to fetch a palm-leaf to make a torch—the matches were safe in an air-tight box in the pocket of his soaked duck trousers. The boy melted into the darkness for a space, and then spoke up at the Doctor's side: "No trees."

The Doctor put his patients under the boat. He made small Jean snuggle up close to the young mother. His little chest of medicines and inconsiderable store of food for his patients he placed beneath the outspread gown of the silent brown woman.

McTEAGUE'S boys grew more larky. They ran in circles around the boat, sang a little, talked saucily among themselves. The Doctor did not like this. To be driven on the beach was really a small matter. He had worked some years in the South Seas—a shipwreck such as this was no uncommon thing. His two patients that were to live would be none the worse for a wetting—the one that was to die he had comforted with a hypodermic.

It was the behavior of Sandy McTeague's crack boat-crew that gave him uneasiness. Those boys were hungry—he knew that by his own stomach; they were used to being fed well and on the hour. They chased each other about the boat again, laughing gleefully in the howling, lashing tempest of wind and rain, and the upturned cutter resounded hollowly with blows from their black fists.

The Doctor shouted angrily. He turned his head the better to deliver his peremptory command, and a hand fell on his shoulder in a familiar, comradely slap. The Doctor jerked about to meet the bitter, sharp, shining eyes of Matupi. His broad black face, his grinning mouth with white teeth that glimmered with horrid suggestiveness, was not an inch from the Doctor's own. An instant the two glared upon each other. Then the Doctor raised his fist, and there fell upon the insolent, grinning face a blow that sent Matupi headlong.

He stood away then. The Doctor could just see his great, supple shape looming over against him like some nightmarish portent of doom. The others ceased their play and gathered about him. Matupi said nothing, or talked so low the Doctor could not hear. He squatted down sullenly upon the sand.

Little Jean reached out from the edge of the boat and touched the Doctor's hand.

"What'd Matupi want, Doctor, now?"

"I gave him what he wanted, honey," soothed the Doctor.

"Is he sick?" persisted Jean.

"Yes, he *was* sick," drawled the Doctor rather grimly, "—sick to death of an ingrowing impudence. But he's better now. Don't you worry, Missy: I eased him with the medicine he needed."

"I don't worry," piped Jean drowsily and in a moment she was asleep.

The Doctor dozed exhaustedly with his useless automatic in his hand. Once it slipped away from his relaxing fingers, and he awoke with a start. The rain and wind had not abated. His patients were wet, but warm and snug beneath the upturned cutter. The bed was not of the softest, but they were fed. A little way off he could see a group of black lumps—Matupi and his attendant satellites—squatting upon the white sand.

Those boys are hungry, thought the Doctor. They had said: "No trees." Suppose the place was bare? That meant no shore-food, and he could not coax fish out of the sea. What was the chance of rescue? What was the chance of the storm lessening so they could go on? Could he make those boys go on? He with no weapons—they with empty stomachs?

"Good Lord," thought the Doctor. "What have I heard about Matupi?"

DAWN was coming. Though the darkness still held, the Doctor sensed it as men do who live some time south of the Line. The lowering black sky took on a grayer tinge—and faded slowly to a pale dirty brown. The black lumps on the sand became Sandy McTeague's crack boat-crew from the Solomons—the crew that feared nothing but a two-fisted white man and a gun that would shoot. Then it was day.

Low overhead the gray-brown clouds streamed away tumultuously with foaming, ragged edges torn adrift by the wind; below, the gray-brown water rolled in foam-rimmed mountains scourged bitterly by the gale until sea and sky rushed together in one mighty blur of storm.

The Doctor looked and saw the Island they had reached in safety was bare of trees—a long ridge the ocean pounded fiercely upon every side. He started across it: white sand with pebbles the size of marbles lay in long streaks, the surf breaking beyond like some great beast that crept upon them with an intermittent baring of white fangs.

Jean crawled out from beneath the boat; the young mother and the lawbreaker from Santa Maria still slept. The Doctor lifted the little girl against his shoulder. He was glad she looked none the worse for her night's experience. The two smiled at each other. Matupi drew near, velvet-footed, and laid his sinewy black hand upon the little girl's arm.

The Doctor obeyed McTeague then. He struck Matupi upon the nose with the butt of his otherwise useless automatic. Matupi shot back with a surprised yelp and a baring of all his big white teeth. The other boys laughed uproariously.

"None o' that," said the Doctor in the dialect of the beach. "I'm the Big Boss here."

"All right, White Doctor," whined Matupi submissively. He fell to cuffing the boys who had laughed.

The Doctor ordered them to make the round of the Island for wood to start a bit of fire. They did so and came trotting back with empty hands. But before they returned, he hastily served his patients' rations from his hidden store and found he had one less mouth to feed. The lawbreaker from Santa Maria had gone on—passed painlessly in the night on the wings of the storm. The Doctor looked at his composed, serene brown face and won-

dered if where he was gone there were no laws forbidding dynamite, and lagoons where fish could be blown up by thousands. Then Matupi spoke over his shoulder.

"Let us bury him for you, White Doctor," he said.

The Doctor whirled about, gripping the barrel of the automatic in his half-uplifted hand. Matupi retreated nimbly and stood smiling ingratiatingly—hunger and weariness in his bitter, glittering eye.

"We'll take him up there." He pointed to the far end of the Island with a muscular, outstretched black arm. "Away from little Missy and the *huahine*."

NOW the Mission Doctor knew just exactly what Matupi meant to convey, and Matupi saw that he knew it. As fury blazed in the white man's face, the smiling ingratiation in that of the black died down to sullen animosity.

"Matupi," drawled the Doctor with deadly calm as he took a step forward the more easily to protect little Jean and the young mother, who munched happily at milk-chocolates, "Matupi," drawled the Doctor, "you go sit down over there until I tell you to get up."

Matupi's reply to this stern command was to dash forward with a sudden and rather alarming return of playfulness and to seize the automatic by the presented butt. The Doctor lost his temper—which was a serious blunder. It showed Sandy McTeague's boat-crew he was shaken; it also showed them the automatic was no good except as a club. For no white man would rage and fight as did the Doctor if the gun in his hand would shoot them full of holes.

Matupi picked himself up, looked back at the Big White Boss and laughed insultingly. He swaggered up the little slope and over to the other side of the Island. And Sandy McTeague's boat-crew followed their leader. It was mutiny — flat and uncompromising. The Doctor realized that most of his prestige had gone with the discovery that the gun would not shoot. He saw them lying in a row on their diminishing stomachs, their bushy heads raised clear of the eyes above the ridge, while he buried the lawbreaker where the body rested beneath the boat on the sand.

It was the only safe place. The Doctor did not dare take the body into the surf. That meant leaving Jean and the young mother, the boat and his precious chest of stores. He had to scoop the grave with the automatic and the drinking-shell from the water-cask. He stopped every other second and looked up at the ridge. At one of these intervals he saw three of the heads were gone. The Doctor stood up instantly. The boys were scooping water-holes on their side of the beach. This argued a mind—Matupi's—and a determination to survive that animated the breasts of that whole unruly crew.

NIGHT fell; the wind died; the sea rose, and the stars came out. The Doctor placed his two patients under the boat — he hated to think of the other under there too. But he did not dare attempt alone such a mad, ugly sea as lay all about. The young mother was dumb with the fatalistic silence common to brown island-folk in a time of misfortune. Little Jean was feverish and restless. The danger of delay that had forced the Doctor away from the safe refuge of Torres beach was considerably augmented now. She lay down upon the wet sand and then popped up again.

"Doctor!" she shrilled excitedly. "Doctor-man, I knows who comes here —I knows!"

"Who, Jean, who?"

"Peel 'Em Thin, Doctor, Peel 'Em Thin in the *Faith, Hope an' Charity*. He takes cargoes o' they little bit stones to Port Moresby. P'raps he'll come soon."

Perhaps he would. Peel 'Em Thin Doncaster,—called so because of his insatiable desire to save,—master of the schooner *Faith, Hope and Charity*, was sorely needed on that bank of "little bit stones." Against his sober judgment the Doctor allowed himself to be cheered by Jean's sudden outburst of information.

"Good enough, Missy!" he cried. "Of course he'll come soon, and we'll

just stand by snug and happy until he does."

"Yes, so we will, Doctor-man," sighed Jean, and forthwith, she fell into a feverish sleep.

The Doctor stood beside the boat with his back to the sea. He did not dare sit down. Now that the rain had ceased and the wind had fallen, it was only too easy to go to sleep even with his stomach cruelly empty. Yes, the Doctor knew just how hungry those watching black brutes were. He stared at the row of bushy heads above the snowy ridge. Some had dropped down but not quite out of sight. Gone to sleep, he supposed. He stared so steadfastly he thought the row advanced—coming much nearer. He started and gripped afresh the stumpy barrel of the automatic.

MATUPI arose to his full height, kicked right and left with a fine show of anger and scorn and strode straight down the ridge to the boat. There was nothing sly or wary about his approach. He drew near with the greatest confidence, a smiling assumption of frankness beautifully blended with just the right amount of servility of the head-boy of the boat-crew for the Big White Boss.

The Doctor let him come. He even hailed him. "Hullo, Matupi!" The beast had a plan, and the white man knew what it was. He had a plan too.

After that friendly hail Matupi came on somewhat contemptuously. He had the White Doctor so beautifully fooled that his real design began to show in his bitter, glittering eyes. The Doctor advanced one stride to meet him and smashed the butt of the automatic straight between those ugly eyes.

The thing was so sudden that Matupi went down. He picked himself up in a twinkling and shot nimbly back up the slope. He was received with a chorus of yells—derisive and reproachful. The Doctor realized the situation thoroughly. He held them at bay solely by virtue of being white. Matupi, having been in such straits before and found a white man easy enough eating after all, had been foiled in his first attempt to establish his claim of equality before his fellows. The Doctor, his stomach limp and failing from a steady diet of rain-water, wondered just how long it would take for Matupi to prove himself not a liar. His question was answered at dawn.

His own increasing hunger showed how impossible it was to stand a longer siege. The mere fact he was a white man would not restrain that row of motionless, staring brutes for long. They were at the fag end of that superstition. Soon—very soon—he would be beaten down. And then? He determined to try his fate upon his sea, supported in this hazardous undertaking by a silly, groundless hope of the near approach of the *Faith, Hope and Charity*. And even if the schooner did not come, even if the cutter was swamped—that was a clean, decent death compared to having one's bones picked by the members of Sandy McTeague's crack boat-crew.

Very carefully, watching all the time, the Doctor righted the boat. Up on the ridge not a head moved. Quietly, almost in a whisper, looking straight up at that sinister row of bushy black objects, he roused the young mother—told her to roll over behind him and climb into the boat. She could and weakly did. Then he gave the same command to Jean.

Watching, moving with torturing deliberation, doing all with one hand, the Doctor worked his little chest up the side and into the boat. Still the heads never moved.

"I never saw such a bright moonless night in my life," he muttered. "Hope they get the optical illusion I haven't moved."

He almost laughed. What with hunger and anxiety he was in a fair way to become light-headed. He thrust the automatic into his shirt, put both hands behind him, bent slightly forward and pushed hard against the boat. It went back ever so little toward the water. The Doctor pushed again and again.

THERE was an agitation among the bushy black heads up on the ridge beneath the stars. They rose all together, displaying the broad shoulders, the splendid torsos of Sandy Mc-

Teague's boat-crew, nourished with good food, unweakened by drink and hardened by fighting with men and with the sea.

"The nearer the simon-pure savage," thought the Doctor, "the better the boy at the oar."

He pushed hard—desperately—regardless whether they realized it was an escape or not. They did realize. They came to attention on their strong black legs, every man of them. The sight drove the Doctor mad. He screamed at them. He taunted them as the cravenest of cowards; he cursed them and all their blood to their remotest ancestry; he dared them to come on; he told them in detail just what he would do to them when they did. His great, drawling voice vied with the roaring of the sea. His eloquence was compelling. It held Sandy McTeague's rascally, half-starved boat-crew hovering one whole minute at the top of that ridge of white sand.

In that precious minute broad day flashed across the sea. And the Doctor pushed the boat into the water. As if at a signal, the crew swept down from the ridge, a little crouched and running hard. Matupi held the lead. He ran silently, with a horrid, hungry determination. The Doctor gave the boat one final push, seized the automatic and waited with crazy, frenzied courage. If ever there was the lust for murder in a white man's heart, it burned in the Doctor's then.

He fetched Matupi a swinging blow with the butt that sent him headlong and bleeding. Sandy McTeague's headboy was down, but not done with. The Doctor felt a clutch at his ankles. He leaped back, ducked, and the others overran him. He turned and broke through the water for the boat where the young mother, her great, patient eyes almost starting from her head, was feebly fumbling the oars.

He reached the boat, scrambled over the side and seized an oar only just in time. He staggered upright, raised the heavy wooden thing, brought it down with all his strength and—the man so close behind him dived. He came up on the other side of the boat.

The current caught the cutter, and it traveled away from the beach but at only a fair rate of speed. The man shot through the water as only a Solomon Islander can, and the Doctor was exhausted. He knew if the hungry black boy reached the boat, the act was played. He rose totteringly and poised himself for another blow. The young mother moaned and pointed. There was a flash of light in the green water—the white belly of a shark turned up to strike. A long, bloody streak marked the place where the swimmer had been, and the Doctor never saw that particular member of Sandy McTeague's boat-crew again. The rest, as if daunted by the sudden tragedy, turned and ran back up the ridge.

THE Doctor sank down in the bottom of the boat and tried to comfort little Jean. When the sun rose to steer by, he would go—somewhere, sure. So he mumbled on, half stupefied by his own efforts and by lack of food and sleep. The sun came up, and this so encouraged Jean that she raised her head from the Doctor's shoulder.

"Doctor-man," she shrieked. "Peel 'Em Thin—Doctor-man!"

The Doctor shaded his eyes with a shaking hand. And there, fair in sight, were the sails of the schooner *Faith, Hope and Charity,* of which Peel 'Em Thin Doncaster was master.

They had actually to run down all of Sandy McTeague's boat-crew—all, that is, Matupi. Matupi met the party at the beach, full of welcoming smiles, fawning, coaxing cordiality and childlike astonishment over the Doctor's inexplicable behavior. So he was not hanged, after all—only regretfully sentenced to imprisonment for life.

Three months later little Jean went back—well and strong—to Torres beach. As the Doctor could not go with her, he sent a letter to Sandy McTeague.

"There's no bill for this job," wrote the Doctor. "I too nearly, through willful negligence, lost a patient. A word in your ear, Sandy McTeague: when they are that near to simon-pure savages—*let them alone!*"

A COMPLETE NOVEL

CHAPTER I

JUST in the heat of the argument, while Mr. Bennett and Aunt Martha were each setting forth their own views on the subject with ever-rising voices, Aunt Grace turned suddenly to remark that E. J., the cause of their controversy, seemed most indifferent to her fate.

Of course, this was not at all true. E. J. had settled the case for herself long ago, and since she knew exactly what she was going to do, and since her fun was to come, the others might find what enjoyment they could in deciding her future among themselves now. But out of respect for the aunts she didn't put this thought into words.

"I am watching for David," she said, half turning from the white-curtained window, with a little smile for the tall, gaunt figure standing by the marble-topped center-table. "He is late, you know."

Aunt Martha leaned forward to whisper to Mr. Bennett, who was a lawyer down from Boston.

"David—David Holmes. He and our niece are engaged to be married. He has given her a ring!" The old voice actually thrilled as she mentioned this interesting fact.

E. J., in the window, twisted the old-fashioned garnet ring around and around on her slim finger, but she offered no supplement to her aunt's words. Already she felt a little alien to this group in the center of the room, a little superior to all, that is, but Mr. Bennett; and come to think of it, he was only from Boston, while Uncle George Randall mentioned New York.

New York! How she thrilled at the word, flushing softly and prettily as under a lover's caress. David Holmes had never made the blushes come and go so readily.

"MISS ADAMS' uncle, the late Mr. George Randall, of Virginia, has bequeathed to his niece the sum of one hundred thousand dollars with the understanding that she shall go to New York and alone and unaided for one year support herself by her own labor and without assistance from her homefolk." It was Mr. Bennett talking.

"That is to offset E. J.'s Uncle Standish, who left the child a similar sum because he said no one with Southern blood in their veins could ever be depended on to earn their own living," interposed Aunt Martha.

"Our niece's mother was a Randall, from Virginia, but her father was an Adams of Massachusetts," added Aunt Grace with a sigh.

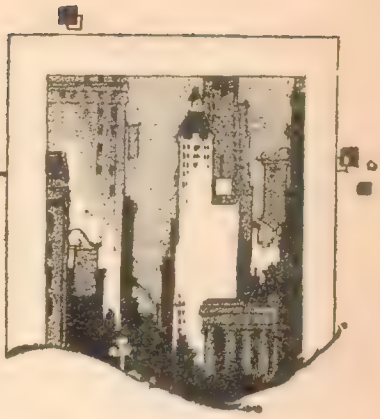
From the white curtains of the window E. J. peered out to say:

"I have a down-South heart and a New England conscience, Mr. Bennett—a bad combination, I'm afraid."

Another smile accompanied this re-

THE BIG TOWN

by W. Carey Wonderly



mark, and her smiles were ever contagious, always warming the very cockles of the human heart.

Aunt Grace, with her high, nervous note predominating, was holding forth again:

"E. J.'s mother died when she was an infant in arms, and her father when she was five years old; she has been with us ever since. Of course, there has never been any reason why our niece should earn her own living—both Owen Standish and George Randall must have known that!

"Owen was New England to his finger-tips," continued Aunt Grace, folding her black-mittened hands. "He married our sister, and they never had any children, and so his interest was centered in E. J. But he was always fearful of that Virginia half of her."

"No," protested the girl gently, peeping out from the curtains, "rather, I think, Uncle Standish was jealous of Uncle Randall, and was afraid I would love him more. Somehow my heart goes out to the State of my birth, Virginia, which I don't remember at all." She threw an appealing glance at Lawyer Bennett, who nodded violently and without hesitancy. "But I loved both of the dear men just the same," she continued, referring to the uncles. "Both were childless; they shouldn't have been jealous. Then Uncle Standish died, and in his will they found that—about a person with Southern blood in her veins. Really, it was a little dig at Uncle Randall."

"And now George Randall has come back at Owen in his bequest," said Mr. Bennett with a faint smile.

"It is quite unlike anything you'd expect to happen to us," murmured Aunt Martha with a helpless little gesture.

"And I don't want two hundred thousand dollars; I don't know what to do with it," protested E. J.

THE low murmur of voices, like a flock of birds to cover, or the fall of rain among the leaves, told her that her elders would shortly settle that score for her. Aunt Grace began to talk of foreign missions as seen through the eyes of their beloved pastor, the Reverend Herbert Winship; the lawyer suggested a possible scholarship somewhere; while practical Aunt Martha remembered that the plumbing in the old house was woefully out of date. E. J. heard them without the ghost of a smile, for her thoughts were all with New York, which beckoned and allured, a dazzling promised land.

"You shall have everything you want, everything!" she cried passionately to the little group around the table with a gesture of her hands. "Mr. Bennett, will you be my lawyer? Will you see that the improvements are made to the house, just as Aunt Martha wishes them—and that Aunt Grace has a goodly sum for Mr. Winship's missions?"

"Not so fast, my dear," interrupted Mr. Bennett with a fatherly smile. "At present you have only your Uncle Standish's money, you know. The Randall bequest isn't yours until you have proved your Uncle George's faith in you—and Southern blood—was well placed. First you must make your own way in New York for at least a year—twelve months."

"As if I couldn't do that!" cried E. J. scornfully. She wondered if any of them detected the thrill in her voice at the mere prospect of such an adventure, but after stealing a glance at the three

faces, so solemn and prim, she quickly arrived at the conclusion that they didn't. They were not the kind to understand.

"Why," spoke up Aunt Grace, at that moment, "didn't George Randall name Boston instead of New York? Boston, so to speak, is within reach."

"You forget that Uncle George could see no more good in Massachusetts than Uncle Owen could in Virginia," cried E. J. with a twinkle in her eyes. "I think he has behaved splendidly—and New York is quite neutral ground. He might have specified Richmond, you know."

Mr. Bennett turned his back on the aunts, and coming over to the window where E. J. was standing, spoke quietly and intimately for her ear alone.

"So you've quite made up your mind to go to New York, Miss Adams?"

"Yes—although it's not the hundred thousand alone, you understand, Mr. Bennett."

He smiled even while her tone carried conviction with it.

"I guess a little lady like you wont find two hundred thousand dollars a very troublesome burden to carry through life," said he.

The thought of so much money staggered her for a moment or two. Money she had never felt the need of in Medford Center, but then Medford Center itself was negligible. She wanted—happiness, more than anything in the world, if these people around her only understood.

"Who benefits by the legacy in case I don't go to New York—or going, fail?" she asked Mr. Bennett.

"Your Uncle Randall's cousin's son, Lewis Randall, a student at Dartmouth," answered the lawyer readily.

SHE was scarcely interested, since she had never heard of the man.

"You must stay for a whole year, remember, and during that time depend entirely on your own resources," Mr. Bennett told her, continuing. "That means finding work and living on your wages. Your Uncle Randall can't stop you from spending your Uncle Standish's legacy, you know; yet if you do, a penny of it, you forfeit the Randall hundred thousand, and it goes to this Lewis. I have made this perfectly plain to you, Miss Adams?"

"Yes, I understand," said E. J.

She thought she would gladly give this Lewis Randall her Uncle George's money, since the idea of such wealth frightened her, if there still remained an excuse for going to New York. But there was none, and her aunts only countenanced the city in order that their niece might enjoy her inheritance. At the end of the year, of course, E. J. would return to Medford Center and marry David Holmes.

Something like this, coming from Aunt Martha's lips, decided E. J. for once and all. The thought of marriage with David was not distasteful to her—David *was* a dear; but the idea of settling down in Medford Center was scarcely alluring. When the year was up, she would persuade David to come to her in New York, or else Virginia.

She turned to Mr. Bennett.

"Since we understand each other, and everything is arranged, I think I could be ready to start next Monday, please."

Directly the aunts began to twitter like a pair of mother-birds—questioning, protesting, advising—until E. J. buried her face against the cool windowpane and refused to answer, leaving everything to Lawyer Bennett. And he was both willing and competent to accept the center of the stage.

THIS was the moment David chose for his entrance. He and E. J. had grown up together. The aunts greeted him a bit noisily; to their middle-aged viewpoint he was as a young god—which, perhaps, was not so wrong when it is added he was generally "considered the handsomest man in Medford Center," as well as the most eligible male in the community. In spite of this, David Holmes was both safe and sane. His speech was a bit thick at times, especially where E. J. was concerned, and so was his figure—a trifle stooped, the legs not long enough for the powerful trunk; but the face was kind and not unhandsome, the heart clean and true. He listened to the aunts' chirpings in silence and then turned to the girl in the window.

"So you're really going?"

E. J. came from the shelter of the white curtains and over to the table where he had taken his place along with the others. Possibly it never struck David as being funny, for he was not blessed with a strong sense of humor, but E. J. wanted to laugh. That poor, defenseless, white-marble center-table, and around it, like a body of parliament, four solemn, sober faces!

"Yes, really and truly I'm going, David," she said, still struggling with her desire to laugh. "I think I owe it to Uncle George, you know."

"Owe it to your Uncle George?"

"Yes. You see, he was so sure I could do it—that I could go to New York and earn my living for a year. If I turned it down, and didn't try to do what I know he wanted, it would be rather—rather like a slap in the face, I think."

"E. J.!" protested Aunt Grace, scandalized.

"That's the Virginia side of her," Aunt Martha remarked, sotto voce.

"Darlings!" The girl held out her arms to the two old ladies, who ultimately surrendered and went to her embrace. "I can't help being *me,*" she whispered. "I didn't mean it disrespectfully. But I feel like a knight-errant: I've got to get out and give the lie to Uncle Owen Standish's words about Southern blood, you see."

"It sounds to me suspiciously like disrespect now," muttered Aunt Martha, struggling to free herself from E. J.'s bearlike hug.

The girl threw a helpless little glance into the male camp, and while David answered, his words were for himself, not her:

"E. J.! I'm afraid you wont come back!"

"What then?" demanded Aunt Grace, looking up.

He didn't attempt to explain.

"You have your Uncle Owen's legacy; heaven knows that's a fortune to us, to Medford Center," he went on, appealing to the girl. "We don't need all this money, my dear; we don't want it. Let the next heir spend it, and welcome!"

This was not unlike the idea that had crossed E. J.'s mind. "Oh, the money—I don't want the money, David," she said, voice and eyes sincere. "But don't you see how I feel about it all? I can't go back on Uncle Randall; I just can't."

MR. BENNETT it was who advised E. J. not to acquaint any of the friends she might make in New York with the terms of George Randall's will. It would be wiser, he averred, to go simply as Miss Adams, seeking a living-wage. This last brought a quick question from Aunt Martha.

"And what is E. J. going to do for a livelihood?" she demanded.

The girl had thought this out too.

"Journalism," she told them with her old familiar smile. "It is David's ambition to own a newspaper in this part of the country, and in New York I can learn the business from the ground up, against that day when David's dreams come true. I think I could write."

"You will need influence," Mr. Bennett warned her.

"I am going to ask Uncle Toby to help me," said E. J.

David smiled, and the aunts nodded their satisfaction. Only the lawyer looked mystified.

"Uncle Toby writes the 'Questions and Answers' column in *The Berkshire Star,*" E. J. explained, anticipating his question. "He lives in New York; the column is syndicated by *The Echo;* you must have seen it, Mr. Bennett. His picture is carried at the top."

"Such a pleasant-looking old gentleman," put in Aunt Martha. "I have a great regard for his sound good sense."

"He looks," David remarked with a flash of humor, "like a benevolent, modern Santa Claus."

"Or portraits of the elder Dumas," murmured E. J. with unsmiling countenance.

As with an effort, Mr. Bennett tore himself away from the group around the center-table and said that he must hurry along or he would miss his train.

"I never heard of your Uncle Toby," he declared in the pompous manner of the fussy little man, "but I am told some of these special writers have a wonderful following, with an influence for

good that is astounding, simply astounding! No doubt this man can give you practical advice regarding the newspaper business. If Mr. Holmes contemplates starting a paper of his own some day, such training as you will receive in New York, Miss Adams, should prove invaluable to you—to the pair of you, of course!" He laughed at his little joke and shook hands all around. "Good-by and good luck," he said to his client, lingering for a last smile. "You have my address when I can serve you further."

Then the door closed upon him, and E. J. realized that her dream had been touched with reality. She stood ready to face that modern land of promise, that old New York, that mad, glad Manhattan.

CHAPTER II

AT a few minutes past five o'clock Toby Lonsdell came out of the Echo Building and stood looking down Times Square for a glimpse of Claudia Rey's scarlet feather, which was recognized as a landmark in that immediate vicinity on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons.

"Coming, Sister Anne?" cried a voice at her elbow.

It was Harvey Shepherd, and at the corner his motor-car chugged a friendly welcome, like a teakettle in mid-Victorian romance. Toby spun round on her heels, her droll little face breaking into a wealth of smiles.

"Oh, Black Sheep, this is nice!" she said, with that twang she would never quite lose. "Where's Claude? Of course she's in no hurry, for she's got to get back to the theater to-night, but Eve is giving her house-warming, you know, and I've a hundred and one things to do. We've got to show in regular clothes, it seems; I implored her to make it a fancy-dress affair—then I could have dipped my fingers in the inkwell and smudged my nose and gone as a printer's devil. But she was adamant, as Jane Austen says."

"I don't doubt for a minute Eve could get a modern ball-gown up her sleeve," Harvey observed seriously.

Toby approved with her scarcely musical but wholly good-natured laugh.

"Eve Masters is getting on famously, or maybe I should say infamously, since she never made a penny until she forsook miniatures for musical-comedy posters and magazine heads. She loaned me a pair of evening gloves the other night and still had a pair to wear herself. You know such a thing couldn't happen to another human being in the Tower, Black Sheep. Such untold wealth is scarcely decent, as I pointed out when I went to borrow a V. . . . . Is this Claude?"

Across the heads of the crowd waved the imprudent tip of the famous scarlet feather, as conspicuous as Henry of Navarre's white plume at Ivry. And the next moment Miss Rey herself was visible, a little breathless from the impact, a trifle more than defiant, as her eyes and lips testified, but tremendously pretty just the same—a tall, slim brown girl in well-fitting clothes.

"I wish," she said, ignoring Toby completely, "you'd bring your car to the stage-door for me once in a blue moon, Harvey; I want the company to think I've got a John. Heaven knows I can lay claim to nothing else but the grippe. Why don't you love me as you love her, Black Sheep?"

"I don't know," Shepherd answered seriously. "Why don't you 'fascinate' me?"

"I don't know how. I've watched Lillian Russell for three solid hours, and still I don't know how."

" 'When next your young man comes to call, greet him with a trace of coolness, and conduct yourself with maidenly reserve,' " quoted Toby, as they went toward the car. " 'Do not accept his invitations too readily, and consult your chaperon as to any little excursions he may suggest.' "

"What are you doing—spinning a recipe for an old maid?" demanded Claudia.

" 'Remember, there are worse positions in life than that of bachelor maid. Such a woman knows leisure, independence and, lastly, friendship—which is the rose in the bouquet of life,' " continued Toby serenely.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" grinned Claudia.

"It has never failed," returned Toby calmly. "I have hundreds of letters on file to prove my beneficence to mankind."

At the door of the motor-car which Harvey held open for them, Toby pushed herself ahead of Miss Rey and seated herself first.

"Look at Claude's get-up and then look at mine," she retorted. "I'm tired of getting in and out last and having people think I'm her maid. . . . . You may get in now, honey."

"You wear such miserable clothes!" emphasized Claudia, who looked like a cover on a fashion journal. "Six years in New York, and your skirt still pulls up in front and dips down in back, and you sometimes wear red and pink together."

"I haven't the heart to separate them," murmured Toby. "Anyway, you should worry; they'll be dubbing us Beauty and the Beast next."

Presently the car stopped at the door of the studio-apartment building which one of them had dubbed the Tower of Babel, and Harvey Shepherd, jumping down, stood at attention while Toby and Claudia descended. Miss Rey sprinted lightly across the pavement and was immediately swallowed up in the darkness of the entrance, while Toby Lonsdell followed more slowly.

CLAUDIA and Toby lived together on the third floor; Claudia was general understudy for the "Blue Monday" company, and Toby was a special writer on the afternoon edition of *The Echo*. Both girls had come from small towns in the Hinterland; both girls were eager for new worlds to conquer. Toby, after six years in New York, commanded a salary of fifty dollars, but the stage had treated Claudia less kindly, and at times discontent sat on her features like a green toad. Toby knew that most of her money went for clothes—she was of that type known as "dashing" and at one time she had entertained high hopes of winning Harvey. He was of the Westchester Shepherds, and wealthy in his own right, a dilettante whose studio in the Tower was the happy hunting-ground for the various writers, artists and musicians grouped under its roof.

Claudia was waiting at the elevator-shaft when Toby came up, and now that Harvey had gone, her eyes looked tired and her figure listless.

"What's wrong? Has Rozinante gone on strike again?" demanded Miss Lonsdell, placing her finger on the push-button and holding it there.

"Oh, Toby, I'm about all through," Claudia said with an odd little note in her voice. "Grainger gave me merry H. to-day; I'm sure to get my notice at the end of the week."

"That's three days off," observed Toby. "And there's Glynn; he's wild about you, honey."

"Oh, my dear, that's all off," retorted Claudia with a little laugh. "Quintin and I have found out we can get along jolly well without love in this world; we're both after the same *rara avis*—money; for that's all fame and success is. Poet and Peasant introduced him to Cherry Bough the other day, and she took a huge fancy to him and offered him the position of accompanist on her vaudeville tour. Of course he will take it."

"He wont if you ask him not to," said Toby bluntly.

"As if I cared—" commenced Claudia, and then she altered her tone and added: "I wouldn't stand in the dear boy's way for the world. Cherry can help him; she's the foremost light-opera prima donna on the stage to-day. And he's ambitious!"

"We all are," retorted Miss Lonsdell as the elevator dropped into view, "but that don't turn us into blithering idiots, Claude. You talk like a book. We're not Broadway, here in the Tower, you know," she went on in a calmer voice. "Lord, the joy of spending the dollar you've toiled for! If that's not the spirit you've brought with you to New York, then you'd better hie yourself back to that Hoosier graveyard you hail from and marry the drug-store Beau Brummel. And I'm ashamed of Quin. Hasn't he learned every opera since Eden by heart? What's the matter with his memory? I thought he was going to write one now?"

"Nobody would produce it," muttered Claudia sullenly as she followed Toby into the lift.

Miss Lonsdell ignored this last remark and turned to speak to the negro elevator-boy, who broke into a wide grin at sight of her.

"Ah knows jus' what you're gwine to ast, Miss Toby," he cried. "Rosy-antie got stuck on de fift' floor, right over Ab'ham's Bosom. Ah knowed dat was you when Ah heard dat long ring."

"All right, Charon. I'll forgive you this time."

"You-all got comp'ny, Miss Toby."

"I'll not forgive you that," said the girl as she got off at her floor and hurried away down the corridor. "Who in the kingdom of cats, Claudia? And we booked for the Masters blow-out.

CHAPTER III

CLAUDIA REY and Toby Lonsdell occupied a small studio-apartment on the courtyard, where there was no precious north light and the rents were comparatively modest. Eve Masters, across the corridor, had both north light and a telephone; but then Eve, after living on biscuits and painting miniatures for two long years, had suddenly experienced a change of heart, with the result that her posters and magazine covers permitted hitherto untold luxuries. Only one other person in the Tower boasted such a handsome suite, and that was Harvey Shepherd—who, they all declared, didn't count. The Black Sheep could have bought Babel some afternoon instead of a good cigar and never noticed the financial difference.

Most of the others in the Tower were like Toby and Claude—"still hoping." Directly over them were the Kute Kiddies, while Quintin Glynn and the Poet and Peasant likewise shared the fourth floor, known to the third as "Abraham's Bosom"—which, upon inquiry, Ivy Lyn discovered meant "the rest of the blessed dead." This was purely a hoax, since no one ever rested in that atmosphere of voice-culture, piano-playing, typewriter-clatter and ceaseless fiddling.

It was March, and the twilight still lingered in the corridors, so that the electric lights hadn't been turned on yet; but just the same Toby made out the figure of a girl—her "company"—waiting patiently outside her door the moment she turned the corner. Toby's brows went together, and she craned her neck slightly forward, though she would have scorned the idea that she was nearsighted. The girl seemed quite self-possessed, and though she had been waiting for more than an hour, her manner appeared serene, even smiling.

"Although how she can smile with Bedlam broke loose upstairs is more than I can see," muttered Miss Lonsdell.

THE girl moved back a step as Toby produced her key and fitted it to the lock, and when the door was opened and a cozy prospective disclosed, she said in a voice which attracted at once.

"They told me Uncle Toby lived here—Uncle Toby of *The Echo,* you know."

Miss Lonsdell's jaw dropped; she felt a little weak, and suddenly was thankful that Claudia had lagged behind.

"Who told you that?" she demanded, her breath coming a little fast.

"*The Echo*—one of the young men in the office. He said I couldn't see Uncle Toby during business hours, but if I called at his home— You see, I wanted to speak to him so desperately that I even took this chance. I'm E. J. Adams, from Massachusetts, and I've read Uncle Toby's 'Questions and Answers' in *The Berkshire Star.*"

E. J.'s lashes fluttered dangerously, but her lips were perfectly prim and demure. Toby, who was watching her intently, caught the expression and was at once fascinated—and thankful. For, as she explained afterward, nobody without a sense of humor was ever blessed with such a trick.

"Come inside, youngster," she said a bit crisply. "This is a deep, dark secret; the office has been stringing you. If he hadn't a widowed mother or a dozen children to support, I'd have that young gentleman fired. As it is—gather near: I am your Uncle Toby—at your service."

"You!" E. J.'s brows went up, and her smile, that infectious, golden smile which she was ever to be known by, burst upon the startled Toby with all the radiance of a June morning. The young woman, without further ado, took her by the hand and led her over to the merciless glow of an electric lamp, where she looked long and searchingly into the upturned face.

"Yes," she said at last slowly, "the resemblance is striking—and even could be carried further."

There was the same inquiring, heavenward glance, the same pert little nose, childish figure, pastel shades and boyish chest. Even the clothes weren't bad, Toby reflected—not bad, that is, for a community as many miles removed from Broadway as potato-salad church suppers must be. To Toby, and to the entire Tower, in fact, this entire world was divided into two parts—New York and the Hinterland. A year in the Big Town was sufficient to make them sworn Gothamites for life, though most of them had come from the provinces themselves.

"You don't look like Massachusetts," Miss Lonsdell murmured with a friendly little clasp of thin fingers around firm young arms.

"That's the Virginia half of me, I guess," smiled E. J.

"Oh, I see! You're divided into halves like this old world of ours—Eastern and Western Hemisphere, isn't it? School seems as far away as Fifth Avenue—although, really, this is only Sixth."

"THERE is a greater distance between Fifth Avenue and Sixth than there is between Paris and Berlin," sang out Claudia from the doorway, where she had caught the last remark.

"And I rather think I'm more like North and South America, say, than the two hemispheres," E. J. intervened. "I've a New England conscience, but my heart is pure Virginia."

"That sounds interesting," nodded Toby, and she turned and beckoned for Claudia. E. J. stood the scrutiny very well, to Toby's secret delight; for Toby, always impulsive, had liked the girl from the start. "She says she came from Massachusetts," she informed Claudia, "which is such a relief, for I thought she was going to tell me the stork brought her. And I am past seven and no longer believe in Santa Claus or Billy Sunday. The office sent her here," she added.

"But the office didn't tell me you were a girl," E. J. put in. "To be honest, I hadn't an idea you looked anything like Uncle Toby's picture at the top of the 'Questions and Answers' column, but—I didn't expect to see a girl."

"And you don't," cried Claudia. "She's twenty-seven!"

"And as for the office not telling you, well, when a person looks anything like me, New York is not at all interested in whether they're male or female. We're going to have supper now," she added with a smile. "Rest your hat and coat and tell me the story of your life to the business of feeding."

In ten minutes it seemed to E. J. as if she had known these girls a lifetime. Toby had liked her from the minute she caught the sense-of-humor twinkle in her eyes, she declared; and later, at supper, as she saw the interest the girl aroused in Claudia,—poor Claudia, who needed a new interest, just then!—she was frankly glad of her seasonable appearance.

There was no false shyness about her, no pretense; E. J. became truly one of them in that first half-hour under the Tower's roof. Only once did Toby disapprove, and that was when E. J.—telling "the truth and nothing but the truth"—mentioned David Holmes.

"A girl might as well bring a harelip as an engagement-ring with her to New York," she said, shaking her head. "All wrong, all wrong!"

CLAUDIA was due at the theater again before eight o'clock, but she had planned to show up at Eve Masters' studio-warming as soon as she could get away from her duties, which, being those of general understudy, didn't keep her until the close of the performance. She bustled off, leaving Toby and E. J. with the supper-table to

clear away. It had to be done that night, Miss Lonsdell pointed out, for she left home early in the morning, and Claudia didn't get up until noon.

It was Toby's idea that E. J. should accompany them to Eve's party, and when Harvey Shepherd dropped in, a little later, and was duly presented, he promptly and eagerly seconded the motion.

"No use saying you haven't anything to wear," cut in Toby; "this is an evening affair. And no matter what you've got on, if it's different, New York will only think it's a new angle and you'll be credited with starting something. Between us we can rig you out—between Claudia and me, that is, not the Black Sheep. Oh, we call Harvey the Black Sheep because he's the only one of the Shepherds—awful toffs, all kinds of money—who ever went in for trade. It must be trade, Harvey-child; I've seen your pictures and I couldn't call them art."

It didn't require any great amount of persuasion to get E. J.'s consent to attend the party and spend the night with Toby and Claudia, once she was assured she would be welcomed by Miss Masters. In the morning, Toby declared, they could discuss business to their hearts' content. Waiting in the living-room, Harvey heard their ceaseless chatter, their low squeals of laughter, as they dressed for the most important affair ever originated in the Tower, and his own face softened, and his eyes brightened and smiled. For the first time in his life, he was interested in a girl, not girls.

CHAPTER IV

EVE'S studio was generally acclaimed as a bit unusual, just as the artist herself had succeeded in making her own personality at once vivid and arresting, even for New York. Her suite of rooms was large and expensive, and after she had given up fame for fortune,—the Tower put it this way, but not derisively,—she had decorated the apartment to please herself, using a certain black-and-white effect which was bold and striking. Miss Masters herself resembled a Pierrot. She had bobbed her hair and wore a heavy red-and-white make-up at all times, at home or abroad.

To-night Eve was arrayed in a very short skirt, cut full, and made of her favorite black-and-white combination. She lacked only a cap, E. J. thought, to be suitably dressed for a costume ball.

"Looks like a vampire in a movie, eh?" Toby whispered while still within earshot. "Just the same, she has a bank-account and three entire rooms to herself. Sometimes, overwhelmed, I catch myself saying please to her, just as if I didn't know her *when!*"

Eve made a grimace, and at another time a quick and sharp retort would have assailed Miss Lonsdell, but at that moment Quintin Glynn came up with Cherry Bough, the musical-comedy actress—and Eve was anxious to do some costume plates for the star's next show. Miss Bough was only stopping for a few minutes on her way to the Palace, where she was headlining that week, and she had only come because the boy had asked her, not because she was interested in Eve Masters or her work. She was anxious to create this impression, too, and forever seemed to be watching things from a distance.

"Either she looks as forbidding as a mourning-card or as alluring as a Ziegfeld chorus; I suppose it depends on the point of view," said Toby, whom nothing escaped.

Turning to E. J., Toby carried her off to a tall, fair-haired man. "This is the Poet and Peasant, E. J.," she said, smiling up at Andrew Stewart.

E. J. thought she could detect the hayseed still in the light, dull hair, but she liked his blue eyes and the gaunt, strong figure not unlike Lincoln's.

"He writes verses to Eurydice because she is easy to rhyme," Toby said.

Stewart laughed. Eve Masters had just asked him to read an original poem, he said, in an effort to clear the studio of the undesirables, and since he was quite willing "to oblige," he had to hurry away.

At the far end of the room they came upon a bit of Dresden femininity occupied with a violin. "I'm playing 'The Humoresque,'" she volunteered,

with a childish bob of her pretty head. "But somehow it wont come right, and I 'spect I haven't practiced enough. Chubby, please find the Kreisler record and put it on. I learn all my pieces by heart, you know," she added with a bright smile for E. J.

"I am convinced that you have none—heart, to be sure!" retorted Toby, and turned to the chubby youngster, who was watching his spouse with a pained expression. "Have you no authority, as becomes a man of your years and size?" she demanded. He was only an inch or two above five feet, and until Miss Lonsdell explained the situation, E. J. had thought he was only a small boy, sitting up for the party as a special treat. "These are the Kute Kiddies. Ivy, with the fiddle, is a mannequin at Rosalie's—*children's* wear, my dear." There was scorn and contempt in the adjective. "And Chubby plays boy parts with a film-company in the Bronx. Yet they are married!"

The young man looked at E. J. and smiled sheepishly.

"Toby's jealous!" emphasized Ivy like a good wife, taking his part. "Some day we are going to be rich and famous. We're collaborating on a book."

"Yes, after I get home from the studio at night I sit down and write a thousand words, and the next morning Ivy reads 'em and burns 'em up," mourned Chubby.

"But what does E. J. stand for?" demanded Ivy as she sized the newcomer up and quickly decided that she liked her.

"It's just *E. J.*—just that," said the girl, smiling.

None of them ever broached the subject again.

TOBY left E. J. for a few minutes to go over to speak to a good-looking, self-satisfied young man who wrote dramatic criticisms for a weekly society sheet, and E. J., sitting down on the leather seat which ran along one side of the room, gazed around her with frankly interested eyes. Somebody had started the phonograph, with a violin record of Fritz Kreisler's; and Ivy, with serene indifference, was attempting to follow his profoundly beautiful playing of a Bach gavot on her own fiddle. The machine was silenced, but not Ivy, when Andrew Stewart rose to read an original poem.

He looked more strikingly like Lincoln than even before, E. J. decided, as he stood there waiting to begin, a more youthful Lincoln, perhaps, than the great emancipator had been even in his youth, for the Poet and Peasant, in spite of many reverses, knew how to laugh back at the world.

"Do you want to cut it or remain for the worst?" asked a voice beside her; and lifting her eyes, E. J. beheld Harvey Shepherd.

"Is it so worse?" she asked, making room for him beside her.

"I couldn't do better myself," he replied, sitting down with a mock sigh.

Andrew Stewart, reading from manuscript, began:

"When company you chance to have,
And want some extra dishes,
Run—get a can of Bilton's beans;
They simply are delicious."

Ivy's fiddle ceased scraping; somebody giggled. Andrew glanced up with mildly inquiring eyes, and turning again to his verses, said:

"My papers got mixed—that's all. That was not 'Eurydice;' it was tinned confections. However, I paid my laundry bill with that while Mrs. Orpheus is still for sale. But to proceed:

"The Pipes o' Pan foretold the coming day,
When Eurydice stepped out to meet her Argonaut,
Who came with rocks and shrub'ry at his heels,
A tribute to the music that he wrought—"

"I think," twitted Ivy audibly, "I like the baked beans better. 'Eurydice' sounds as if Shakespeare might have written it but didn't."

"Was her Argonaut a sort of mythological Pied Piper?" whispered Harvey, with a pained expression.

"I'm sure I never heard of such miraculous carryings-on before," E. J. returned. "We'll ask Uncle Toby," she added hopefully.

"'Place the patient flat on his back, opening doors and windows to provide sufficient circulation of air. Keep cold

cloths to the brow and prohibit food and drink for at least two hours,' " quoted Miss Lonsdell, who had strolled up in time to overhear E. J.'s last remark.

"I'm in favor of prohibiting food and drink indefinitely," Shepherd observed, sotto voce.

But Apollo urging him, the Poet and Peasant made an effort to finish:

"A tribute to the music that he wrought,
A clarion-call more beautiful than dawn—"

Cherry Bough, her eyes a trifle glazed, broke into a musical little laugh, presently drawing Andrew's attention to her.

"About the delicious beans, you know," she explained: "I was thinking of Mr. Cawthorn; you should serve them up as a lyric and give them to him to digest. Why don't you write a musical-comedy book, Mr. Stewart?"

The Poet and Peasant took a quick step toward her, crushing his manuscript in his hands.

"Am I to consider this an order, Miss Bough?" he asked.

"Good gracious, no!" She turned a little tartly to Quintin Glynn, who, very red, looked at his watch and reminded her of her theater engagement. She didn't linger long after that; neither did Eve secure a commission for costume-plates; but directly the door had closed upon her, the entire room heaved a sigh of relief.

"You see," Toby explained to E. J., "she isn't one of us, and she only came here to stare, as one would do at the zoo. I have no patience with Glynnie. Just because her name is in electrics outside of a theater and her picture on the cover of a sheet of thirty-cent music! She said we were droll."

"Perhaps she was looking at the Poet and Peasant's evening clothes at the time," suggested Eve Masters. She took the manuscript from Stewart and showed it to E. J. It was perfectly blank, without a written word. "It displays marked versatility, however, to jump so nimbly from beans to the pipes of Pan," she said.

"A sort of out-of-the-fire-and-into-the-frying-pan, eh?" grinned Harvey, and was promptly snubbed for his pains.

Claudia came in after the theater, and they danced to the music of the phonograph, occasionally seconded with Ivy's violin; but usually a partner was able to persuade her to give up fiddling in favor of a turn around the rooms. Chubby she refused to dance with.

"They'll be sure to say we look cute—which we do," she announced.

E. J. was tired but happy when she trailed back with Toby and Claudia to the tiny apartment across the corridor. Since the elevator had stopped running hours ago, Ivy sat on the bottom step nursing her aching feet in her cool palms.

"But I don't think I can, honey," they heard Chubby say with a sigh.

"No, this is a respectable house," snapped Toby as she unlocked the door. "Carry her, indeed! Oh, Lord, sweet, sweet home!"

It was home to E. J. too.

CHAPTER V

NEXT morning E. J. was awakened by an immense volume of noises, scarcely alluring, certainly confusing, which took her some minutes to place correctly. Sitting up in bed, knees under chin, she listened. It sounded like rain on a tin roof, and a hundred birds gone mad in song, with here and there a human voice at discord with a piano's full, rich tone. E. J. blinked her eyes, opened her full, rosy mouth and glanced sparrow-fashion around her.

"Babel," drawled Claudia, who was enjoying the moment, from her bed against the opposite wall.

E. J. blinked harder, and then she smiled, much to Miss Rey's secret delight. It was Claudia who said that E. J.'s smile should be preserved for future generations, along with Bernhardt's art and Melba's voice. Photographs never did it justice; the expression was as soft and fleeting as a May dawn, and the prints were cold and stolid, altogether unsatisfactory.

"I couldn't get my bearings just at first," she confessed in a tone that invited confidence. "Are we lazy this morning?"

"Toby said I was to let you sleep; she's gone to the office, hours ago." Claudia sat up and drew her knees under her chin in excellent imitation of E. J., and then wondered quickly if the effect was quite the same—E. J. looked so childishly pretty! Claudia pursued youth as Wall Street does wealth. She was twenty-one and confessed to eighteen, Manhattan's mania for youth, more youth, extreme youth, having spread even to the Tower. "I have nothing to do until I report at the theater to-night. What would you like to do to-day?" she added after a pause.

"Get settled at once." E. J. laughed as she confessed it. "My New England conscience wont let me rest until I know just where I stand. I want to talk to Miss Lonsdell; I'm thinking of trying for the newspaper game."

Claudia looked surprised, and her pretty mouth drooped a little in distaste. Like many New Yorkers she instantly saw the stage in every striking girl she beheld.

"Far be it from me to discourage a canary, but newspapers are messy. Toby will tell you so herself. She works hard at her 'Questions and Answers,' though she has formulas, of course! But think of writing recipes for fudge, cures for chilblain, advice for the lovelorn, notes on etiquette—as practiced by devotees of clambakes and 'socials!' Honest, if Toby hadn't a sense of humor and a real love of the game—"

"Ah, isn't that necessary in every line—a genuine love of the game?" E. J. intervened.

Claudia reluctantly admitted that she guessed it was. Then she leaped from the bed, and putting on a pair of slippers, busied herself around the room.

"Don't get up until I call you; I'll get breakfast," she told E. J.

BUT this was not E. J.'s way, and presently the two girls were occupied in the tiny kitchenette, a space scarcely large enough for one of them. E. J. was a capable cook—it had occurred to her that in a pinch she might earn her living as a chef; and the breakfast she prepared from the scanty larder fairly made Claudia's eyes bulge.

"I'd lose my figure if you did this often," she exclaimed, falling to with evident delight. "Honest, we live mostly in tins here, or off salads and fruit that come in whitey-brown paper from Sixth Avenue—though on high days and holidays we go to Carlotti's and blow ourselves to a sixty-cent table d'hote. Such toast, E. J.—and I didn't know New York eggs would poach!"

"I picked the good ones," confessed the other, pleased.

"Bless Pete! You don't mind my calling you E. J.?"

"Crazy about it; I'm crazy about you all! You know,"—her voice grew serious,—"you've all been wonderful to me, a perfect stranger! I never enjoyed myself more in my life than last night, at Miss Masters' party. You made me feel one of you at once. I hadn't an idea New York would prove so cordial."

Claudia gave a little laugh.

"Say, our New York is only the old home-folk who have put up their hair and let down their skirts, and the boys exchanged Windsors for dress cravats. We're Hinterlanders under the surface, though most of us have come to love the Big Town so fiercely it hurts." Claudia was serious now. "Toby and I talked you over last night, after you'd dropped off to sleep, and we arrived at the conclusion that you *belong*. Toby's a whale of a friend—we're all loyal; but it is Toby Lonsdell who marks time, and woe betide the fellow who falls out of step. You're going to like it here."

"New York has always been the Promised Land to me," acknowledged E. J.

"And there are sixty million others like you," sang Claudia, paraphrasing a popular tune of the hour. "Never mind; you're here and we're going to keep you. You're to stay with us—here, in the Tower, in this bea-you-tiful apartment! Do I look 'gracious' when I say that? I fancy myself immensely as Lady Bountiful—would you call it being Lady Bountiful, E. J.?"

But E. J. was too moved to pay any attention to this gay nonsense which Harvey Shepherd said was their middle name. Not only was she surprised, but she was genuinely touched, and her

manner showed it. Indeed, looking at her, Claudia was so afraid of a scene that she turned the faucet on her chatter and commenced again.

"You didn't dream of such a thing, did you? Oh, we're dreadfully hospitable—dear me, yes! We're going to let you pay a third of the expenses for the privilege of living with us."

E. J. rightly interpreted the fear in her face.

"You're very kind—and I'll try to meet my third promptly," was all she said then, which certainly clinched Uncle Toby's assertion that she "belonged." Presently she added, in her crisp New England tongue: "But I must find work to do, and I'm afraid I'm not gifted, like all of you here. I rather fancy I'm of the Black Sheep's color."

"But Harvey Shepherd is almost wealthy, even in New York!" Claudia said it with a superior little smile. "He will come into half a million next year, when he is twenty-five."

E. J. quickly avoided the momentarily greedy eyes of the other by bending low over the breakfast dishes she was clearing away. This time, next year, she would have her full inheritance, enough to spell fortune even to Claudia, she surmised. She felt suddenly mean that she couldn't speak of this rosy future to her new-found friends; yet such a decision had been rendered after Lawyer Bennett, David Holmes and the aunts had looked the situation squarely in the face. E. J.'s lips were sealed even as her hands were tied.

It didn't require much time to put the rooms in order that day. They were finished before noon, with every nook and corner ransacked and cleared. Then a round of visits at the studios was proposed.

THEY peeped in on Eve, but Miss Masters, very businesslike, was interviewing a model, and Claudia whispered they would come back later. Climbing the single flight of stairs, they next found themselves in Abraham's Bosom, where if they were not welcomed rapturously, at least they were greeted with chairs and smiles.

The Kute Kiddies were away at business, of course, Ivy masquerading as a thirteen-year-old child at Rosalie's, and Chubby playing the boy detective in a feature-film being made at the studio in the Bronx. But the Poet and Peasant was at home, and Quintin Glynn. Andrew told them he had decided to send the sonnet on beans to a large Pittsburgh canning concern, and offered them lunch, which he had just prepared on the gas-stove. Glynn had little to say, although his smile was ready and his eyes scarcely left Claudia's face. It was a different face from Cherry Bough's, E. J. decided, who thought she understood.

Presently he played them a fox-trot he had been working on that morning; and Andrew and Claudia danced it to see if the time was right.

"Like it?" the composer asked E. J., who looked on, smiling.

"Sounds awfully good," she told him truthfully.

"It ought to — Puccini," nodded Glynn. "It's 'The Musetta Waltz' played in two-four time—recognize it now? He should worry—greater composers than Giacomo have been syncopated in Thirty-eighth Street."

"What a scurvy trick!" cried Claudia. "You'll get pinched yet."

"No danger—I'm within the law," Glynn returned calmly. "The law permits the interpolation of so many measures into a composition. Eventually I hope to write an entire opera—from memory."

They went below-stairs to see Eve again, leaving the boys to their lunch, which the girls repeatedly refused to share. Miss Masters was sitting dejectedly by the window, bathed in the precious north light, and between her slender fingers she held a new cigarette. No one had ever been found who had ever seen her smoking, yet she bought cigarettes and constantly carried them about with her, possibly for character's sake, Toby ventured. Eve was such a poseur—and such a brick!

"I've wasted a whole morning looking for a model," she explained as Claudia and E. J. sank down on the leather bench along the side of the room. "I don't want arms and shoul-

ders, well-turned ankles or a Mona Lisa smile to-day. I try to be fair, especially to women, but it seems they wont be fair with me. I want piquancy—that most of all. It's a poster for 'The Blue Pierrot,' Derringer's new show. I want youth—don't preen, Claudia."

"More Greek to me," muttered Miss Rey, with nose in air. "As a matter of fact, I was thinking of E. J."

"As a matter of fact, I've been wondering the same thing," Eve confessed. "Stand up, please. H'm! I'll pay you two dollars an hour, though I sha'n't want you long," she added, looking at E. J. curiously.

"You're very kind," hazarded the girl, a trifle confused.

"No, only honest," said Eve. She turned briskly to Claudia. "Get out," she commanded.

CHAPTER V

EVE MASTERS' "Blue Pierrot" opened up a new avenue of thought for E. J.; for when it was completed, the poster was pronounced the most striking thing the artist had ever done; and Derringer, the great theatrical magnate, was willing to discuss a unique costume effect with her. Really, he was interested in the flower-faced model that smiled down at him from the wall, and it didn't take Eve long to ascertain this fact.

"Is she a professional?" he asked, after some beating around the bush.

"Model or actress?" flashed the artist. And then she added: "Miss Adams is a little friend of mine. I think she has no business just at present."

"She ought to do well," said Derringer, eying the poster.

Eve discussed the situation in Toby's apartment that night, the principal curled up in an imitation tapestried chair, so that the others behaved as if she wasn't a hundred miles within earshot. They were all immensely interested in E. J.'s future, and possibly remembering their early days in Manhattan, when they were juniors, they were anxious to see her get a fair start. Without a trace of self-pity she had confessed that she wasn't at all artistic; she neither painted nor wrote nor sang nor played. It was like Claudia to suggest the ballroom, but professional dancers were fast going out, as even she owned up, after a moment's thought.

"And it's too late for skating," she added with a world of regret in her voice. "All New York was on ice this winter, but now spring is almost here. It is, Eve! I don't give a fig for what the calendar says: Ziegfeld is announcing the cast for this year's 'Follies,' and that's the real sign in this town. Spring is here."

"Gosh!" sighed Toby with a far-away look in her eyes. And then after a little pause she said thoughtfully:

"One doesn't come to New York to learn journalism. You master the A-B-C's back in your old home-town and then come here to sell the Big Town an idea."

Eve, looking reflectively at her unlighted cigarette, was reminded of Derringer and what his interest implied.

"Derringer was alive to the possibilities of the girl on my poster," she ventured after a moment. "It would be an easy matter to get with one of his shows, my dear."

"Somehow I never saw myself in a show," puzzled E. J.

"It will mean chorus," Toby put in.

"Or you could make a living, I think, as a model," Eve added carefully. "Of course, it is just yourself that counts. You are a type. Artists would want you for heads, for magazine covers and book illustrations, never the 'altogether,' as Du Maurier has it. You're so typically to-day, youngster. You want to cultivate the smartest shrug, the smartest talk, the smartest dress, and then you'll be as vividly New York as the Knickerbocker corner. Never mind the sob-sisters' union; Toby can hold down that end of the game for us, youngster. Probably you promised the folks back home that you would never be an actress, but don't let that stop you signing a contract with Derringer. From ladies who 'comede' and gentlemen who 'emote,' good Lord deliver us!"

"I know it's some job finding a career

for a person who drops in upon you without a spark of genius," laughed E. J., "but I think I'm not partial to the chorus. Pneumonia runs in the Adams family instead of gout, you see."

EARLIER in the session, it had been decided that E. J. was to remain with Toby and Claudia, at least for the present. In this way she would bear one third of the expense of the apartment, an item which filled Miss Rey with visible joy, for the Avenue was already riotous with spring styles, and her slim pocketbook had not permitted her to restock her wardrobe. These girls, who in time became the V. V. V.'s of the Tower (it was Harvey Shepherd's idea: Veni, vidi, vici—E. J. came, Claudia saw and Toby conquered) never required the large studio-space which Eve Masters found necessary for her work, so that they got along very comfortably in what was actually a small apartment. Toby was always out of the house by nine o'clock, while on the other hand, even on matinée days, Claudia never got up until noon.

Yet she had found the stage a hard master, as she was fond of explaining to E. J., when, of a morning, the two girls would sit huddled up in their respective beds, unbosoming themselves in the privacy of the dark little room. E. J. heard all about Quintin Glynn, who couldn't interest Cherry Bough in his music, and finally was struck with the idea of interesting her in himself. Claudia, too, expressed herself as being perfectly willing to find a quicker route to fortune than by work, worry and wishing.

"It's all very well for you to shake your head—it's a trick of Toby's and goes with ink-stained fingers, gray hairs and indifferent corsets. But you don't understand—nobody does but one who has gone through the mill," Claudia defended herself. "I'm ambitious. I want to work, I want to work!" Like the ladies of the screen-world, she could always squeeze a tear. "Yet what does it all avail me? I've been on the stage for three years now; I am young and pretty—we're being honest now, honey, and I am—I know it! But what does it all get me? I'll tell you: a miserable old understudy, paying a few miserable dollars a week, and without the ghost of a chance of playing the lead if I live to be a thousand. It's a dog's life!"

"Don't commence to feel sorry for yourself; a slow dose is preferable to that," cried E. J., who had almost a boy's horror of tears. "Your chance is bound to come—only stick on the job and be there when it arrives."

"You don't know stars," was Claudia's gloomy comment. "Do you think the cunning Jacquelin Brae would give me, a poor little understudy, a chance to play her part? Not on your daguerreotype! If she'd break her arm, she'd come to the theater with that member in a sling and the next morning all the papers would speak of her 'wonderful endurance' and her 'sole desire' not to disappoint her public. Business of laughing!"

E. J. only smiled. "You sound," she said, "exactly like the scenario for a Mary Pickford photoplay. Shall we get up this morning?"

Claudia looked longingly at her weekly dramatic sheet, which she studied religiously from cover to cover each issue, but at that moment Harvey Shepherd pounded loudly on their door, shouting:

"Telephone for E. J. Adams!"

"Who's that?" demanded Claudia, a smile breaking at sound of a masculine voice.

"Mr. Shepherd," came the dignified answer.

"Go 'long—there aint no sich animal."

E. J. sprang from the bed, and was throwing on some clothes as quickly as possible, her active brain already busy with a dozen possibilities.

CHAPTER VII

THE BLACK SHEEP was busy with some unwieldy clay when E. J. dashed into his studio, with a muttered apology, to use his telephone. As she seated herself on the edge of the stand, raising the instru-

ment in her hands, he disappeared beyond a curtained doorway, leaving her alone in the room. Presently a voice which seemed centuries removed hummed faintly in her ear.

Her first thought was of Massachusetts, Medford Center and the aunts. Then she knew better—a masculine voice swore softly and picturesquely, not at her but at that provoking person known generally as Central.

"I am in a rotten hurry, and an ungodly sight—"

"Hello, hello!" cried E. J.

"This the Tower—I mean Uffizi Hall?"

E. J. laughed; it was one of them—it was Chubby, since Chubby was the only male under that roof whom she had heard swear, and he apologized by saying his size made it necessary.

"Yes, Chubby, this is E. J.," she called.

"Thank the Lord," he muttered piously. "Here I am in a corner drugstore, dressed up as *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. E. J., we want a girl right off the bat for this picture—young, pretty—well, you, in fact. I described you to Mack,—he's our director,—and he said get you at once. That's why I'm in between a bunch of headache cures and soda-water flavors, phoning. Come up here at once—can you?" His voice sank to an excited whisper. "It may lead to something better, something permanent. We're out on a location now." He gave her the spot, and told her how to get there.

"Oh, Chubby, you're a prince!" she cried, her first thought flying to compensation. "Of course I'll come right up, and thank you hugely."

His voice came tinged with tears.

"A prince? H'm, that's a king's little boy, isn't it? Shame on you, E. J. I have warmed a viper in my buzzum."

"Go 'long!" Her merry laugh reached even Shepherd, in the next room. "I'll be there before you can say Jack Robinson, Chubby. Shall I be Shakespeare or ingénuish, when I meet Mr. Director?"

"Be yourself," snapped Chubby. "That's why we're sending half across Manhattan for you. Plenty of actresses out here."

SHE came away from the telephone with a low, little-girl chuckle.

"A thousand thanks, Black Sheep," she caroled.

"Baa!" he responded, coming from behind the portière, his usual greeting. "I couldn't help overhearing; it was Chubby, at the studio?"

"Yes, he's got work for me, bless him!" she cried. "He says I'm to be just myself, which is the hardest thing in the world for any woman to do. It comes so natural to act! I'm quite up in the air about it."

Shepherd watched her bright face, so vividly alive, with almost answering interest. It seemed incredible that a girl couldn't read his secret, yet the truth had never crossed her mind. She was not a girl to read affection in every man's glance; and then, there was David. Toby knew about David Holmes, but she had seen the eternal fire burst into flame in Harvey's eyes when they first met E. J.'s, and she experienced a tinge of regret, of sadness for—one of these men.

"So it's almost *vici*, eh?" the Black Sheep said after a moment, with a quiet smile. "You have arrived; soon you will emerge the conqueror. . . . . Don't let them throw you from a cliff, and remember the hero is only a villain when it comes to hogging a scene. Good luck, E. J."

"I'll make you all sit up when you see me on the screen!" she cried, running lightly from the room.

She found Claudia dressed and sitting by the window when she got back, but before she could impart the great bit of news, E. J. was obliged to inspect a new chapeau in a fashion-sheet.

"The very hat for my style," Claudia insisted. "I am going to have one; all the girls in our set are sporting them."

"Our set" was popularly supposed to embrace the younger and prettier actresses of the New York stage, and was a term much in use by the general understudy. Toby and Eve howled it down, but E. J. was not Toby and Eve. She listened for all of five minutes before she could get away or speak of her own business.

"Chubby just phoned for me; I'm to be a film, like Sarah."

"Chubby said he'd remember me the next time my type was required," was Claudia's comment. "Of course it's not the legit' by a jugful, honey, yet it will give you a taste of fame. Say to Chubby not to forget me. I guess I might as well go in for the thing too—Mrs. Fiske has, I see."

E. J. dressed carefully, and while her wardrobe had not been added to since leaving Medford Center and the aunts, New York had taught her how to wear her clothes and Toby had prevailed upon her to accentuate a striking resemblance which she bore to a certain greatly talked-about dancer who was accepted just then as the smartest of the smart by all Manhattan.

She was radiantly pretty as she stepped into the elevator—which Toby in a happy moment had dubbed Rozinante because, like *Don Quixote's* horse, it was a poor thing at best. The grinning colored boy gave her a soft, respectful "Good morning" in the patois of the Southland, and as they descended, E. J. was moved to say:

"You're not from New York, from the North?"

He wore a neat blue uniform, and he lived with cousins over toward Columbus Avenue, but neither his brass buttons nor his relatives could ever make him forget the land of his birth.

"I'm from Virginia, Missy," he said quickly, his eyes narrowing. "You're not—leastways by your talk; yet yo' seems like Virginia to me, somehow. My name's Augustus, though Miss Toby calls me Charon."

They had reached the street-level.

"It's only a way Miss Lonsdell has," said E. J. "And I often think of Virginia."

It was late March, but Easter wasn't until April, and a sort of Lenten inactivity hung in the air. Bedford Park, at the end of her journey, found her just a little tired, and when she had climbed into the waiting automobile which was to carry her out "on location," she learned that she had come the longest way in spite of Chubby's minute directions. Arriving at the scene of present activities, E. J. was greeted by Chubby, still in costume, and taken over to meet Director Macklin. The girl experienced a sudden and vague uneasiness as she shook hands with this man who was to guide her destinies in her first undertaking and decide on her future worth to the company by the net result; yet he was a reliable and conscientious person of flesh and blood who worked early and late to achieve the artistic success he craved. E. J. pleased him at once by her modest bearing and untheatrical air, which meant a good mark against Chubby's name, since it was he who had suggested her after a dozen applicants had been tried for the part.

"We're not ready for you yet, Miss Adams," Macklin said as they walked toward the stage which was erected in the middle of an immense lot, "but I'd like you to watch this scene and get the drift of things if you can. You will work with Mr. George Burton."

"A new fellow Mack picked up somewhere—fancies him immensely," whispered Chubby as the director disappeared to speak to his assistant. "No experience, but a corking front—photographs well, you know. Mack prefers that kind; he can teach them to do things his way. He 'made' her, and him, and the other one." He named three screen stars of the first rank. "Amateurs of the rawest kind when Mack took hold of them, and look at them now! If he thinks it's in you, he'll do his best, and Mack's best is a mighty fine thing, let me tell you. I'm sorry you're working with a greenhorn, though."

"Very likely, Chubby, the greenhorn is every bit as sorry to be working with me," answered E. J. with her wonderful smile.

Macklin caught the full force of it as he came up with his new actor, George Burton.

CHAPTER VIII

EVEN E. J.'s unskilled eyes could see George Burton didn't carry around with him that stamp of the metropolis which seemed so much a part of, say, Harvey Shepherd. The Black Sheep was typically New York in appearance, in manner and speech,

a perfection which Quintin Glynn had copied more or less successfully, and even Andy Stewart hoped to attain some day. The real male New Yorkers are as much alike as peas in a pod, for to be "different" strikes a discordant note and is the great unpardonable sin in the category of American men.

The young man whom Director Macklin introduced as George Burton was not New York in the smallest degree, if New York is to be characterized by Mr. Shepherd and his kind. Burton was a "type"—taller, slimmer and younger, not so much younger in years, perhaps, as in his point of view; and at that he had a decidedly sullen expression in his dark eyes, albeit he followed Macklin's directions closely. His hair, a trifle longer than Beau Brummel decreed for 1916, was brown; the nose was good, and the lips were full and red.

Miss Lonsdell, upon seeing him later, exclaimed, "What a delightful daguerreotype we have with us this evening!" and Uncle Toby's decision was accepted as gospel by millions of readers, as *The Echo* proudly pointed out at the top of its "Questions and Answers" column.

Macklin, just intrusted with his first "feature" by the corporation by whom he was employed, had naturally thought of filming a Civil War story, and with this thought had come George Burton, looking for work. He couldn't forget what Ince had done with Charles Ray, and while the picture with Chubby, in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* dress, had to be finished first, since it was a weekly release, Macklin engaged Burton on the spot. The newcomer was to do a bit in the *Fauntleroy* drama in order to become "camera broken" in time for the Civil War feature; but going over the ingénues in his stock company, the capable director had found himself stumped—with the consequence that Chubby suggested E. J.

Macklin liked E. J. even as he liked Burton. And E. J. was quicker to catch the drift of things at the studio than the young man. Macklin gave his new people ten minutes of his precious time back at the company's studio that evening—where Chubby, as a privileged character, and as escort to E. J., was permitted to remain. Naturally, much of the talk was directed at the "discovery"—whose parents, it seemed, had slipped up dreadfully when it came to handing out names. "George Burton" was never built for the screen, the three-sheets, or even the half-sheets.

"I'm going to call you 'Burton George' in the future," announced Macklin. "You will appreciate at once—eh?—that the effect is entirely different. Burton George!" He seemed pleased.

The young man himself uttered no protest, his sullen eyes fixed on the point of his shoes. In that moment E. J.'s interest in him was aroused for all time, and while her sense of humor made her dub him the Melancholy Dane,—at least in private,—her sympathies were none the less genuine.

"Hold on! You know you'll have to find a name for *her*," cried Chubby suddenly, when the interview seemed about over.

Macklin rather fancied his christenings, though he felt he had done enough work for one day, and E. J., of course, was not his "wonder-boy."

"Miss Adams, isn't it?" he said. "Adams is always good—suggests Maude, and as such is fixed firmly in the public mind as sure-fire. Now for the first part."

"It is E. J." she told him.

"But E. J.—"

"H'm, Miss Adams' name, all right," chuckled Chubby triumphantly.

Macklin's brows came together as he repeated the letters under his breath. "It wont do for publicity, you know," he said at last. "It's too much to expect imagination in the nickelodeons; they only use their eyes. And 'E. J. Adams,' even with 'Miss' before it, would only suggest the villain. We might make it Elsie—"

"Oh, dear, no!" She made a wry face and a gesture of repugnance at the same time. "Let it be Eloise, Esmeralda—anything with an *E*, but not that, please! 'Elsie' reminds me of Sunday afternoon at home in Medford Center and a whole shelf of books I had to read, and no others, on that day."

"Edna!" shouted Chubby, as if bidding at an auction.

Macklin shook his head. "Eleanor," he said, and the discussion was closed as far as the Aurora Studios were concerned.

CHUBBY felt not altogether displeased with himself and his work, that day. E. J. was his "find," just as Burton was Mack's "discovery." Since she and the newcomer were to work together in the next feature, Chubby was anxious and ready to extend the hand of good fellowship to Burton, and this meant inviting him home to the Tower, there to make him one of them. The man, he knew, was a stranger in New York, and the hospitality of the Kute Kiddies exceeded even their net earnings.

But Burton's refusal came quick and short. Lyn looked at him with the mild surprise of a child, a child that doesn't understand rebuke. It was this same expression that "made" Chubby for the screen, and even Burton must have felt it, for he reddened and apologized, hastily murmuring something about a previous engagement.

Lyn was the least suspicious mortal on earth, as well as one of the kindliest, and this explanation not alone set things straight but brought forth a second and very hearty invitation to "come round to the flat whenever you get good and ready." The diminutive Chubby positively reeked with hospitality, and E. J. afterward assured Toby that he likewise mentioned something about "good music." But here, as Miss Lonsdell pointed out, E. J. must have been mistaken; even a model husband couldn't refer to Ivy's fiddling or yet her vocal efforts as music of any sort, good or bad.

It was right after Chubby's further urging that the girl happened to look up and saw Burton watching her with such a curious expression that she couldn't resist a laughing little thrust.

"I am not Mrs. Lyn," she said. "I shall not be responsible for your entertainment."

His face from chin to brow colored then—almost angrily, she thought; but at the same time there flashed through her mind that she had been very nearly guilty of rudeness.

"You must come and see us, Mr. George—Mr. Burton." She leaped from one name to the other with a droll little gesture, and Chubby quickly echoed her pleasant laughter. "It is to be Burton George, then? Good! You see, I happen to live in the same studio-building with Mr. and Mrs. Lyn, and I can vouch for our interesting personalities. Come, wont you?"

AFTER dinner that night, when Claudia Rey had taken herself off to the theater, and E. J. and Toby were clearing away the dishes, the door flew open and Ivy Lyn sprang into the room, politely knuckling on the panel after she had safely made her entrance.

From the kitchenette, Toby sang out: "Nobody home!"

"I know, honey, but it's sweet of you to admit it," Ivy decided. "Chubby sent me down," she continued, addressing herself wholly to E. J. "A man has called, either the handsomest thing you've ever glimpsed in all your days, or else a trifle quaint, like the tintype of your darling daddy in his first long trousers. He wants to come up—I mean, he wants you to come up, E. J., —Chubby does. Mr. Georgy-Porgy does too, I guess."

"It must be Burton George, from the studio," E. J. explained to Toby over her shoulder. "We just met him to-day, and Chubby asked him around."

"Oh, dear, I suppose we shall have to have lunch!" broke in Ivy anxiously. "I'm sure there's not a smack in the icebox at home. May I see what you've got?"

"Layovers for meddlers—don't take the olives; they're not the kind that comes loose, from the delicatessen. Get the cheese from Eve; she buys Roquefort," informed Toby.

"All right," said Ivy. And then, suddenly conscience-stricken, she hurried back to her guest.

"Only please hurry, E. J." came the plaintive wail from the door. "He looks so secretly unhappy, nursing his hat."

"I suppose you are what the critics would call funny without being vulgar," snapped Toby, but she was really thinking of something quite foreign to Ivy's weirdly involved figures of speech.

"Didn't you tell me something about a man named David once, back in that nice pie-for-breakfast town you came from?" she asked, when she was alone with E. J.

CHAPTER IX

BURTON GEORGE, unlike the prima donna in the "Musical Notes" in *The Echo,* didn't leave them all "begging for more" upon the occasion of his first visit to the Tower. Chubby's loyal soul made him suggest that he "wasn't at home among them yet," and E. J. said it was ridiculous to expect a man to stand on his head and wiggle his ears the very first time he came to call. Since truth must prevail, it will have to be chronicled that Burt said little and observed a lot during his first evening in Bohemiana. Like a person coming into a brightly lighted room, out of the dark, he felt uncertain of his bearings, and when he became familiar with the scene around him, and understood that this wasn't "make-believe" at all, that which was in his thoughts kept him silent, perhaps with shame.

"He struck me as being quite Sardouish—which is not a dish on a Chinese menu, Ivy. He simply sat and glowered," was Toby's verdict.

"*Glowered* is good," observed Chubby, and wrote it on his cuff.

"He was—strange," said E. J., referring to Burton. This is exactly how his conduct appeared to her. She couldn't understand the heart that would remain cold to the charm of these merry people in the Tower.

He was still there, just the same, when Claudia came in from the theater, later. Miss Rey had been known to express herself as being "tired as two sticks" and yet rise visibly to the occasion when a new man presented himself on her horizon. She talked prettily and forgot to grumble to-night, and it is hoped she made the desired impression; but after all, the speechless Mr. Burton George went away with his sullen eyes last turned on E. J.

"Done for!" muttered Toby shortly to herself. And then she let her mind dwell on Harvey Shepherd and then on the man back home, David Holmes. She was not envious; she was not even sure she would have appreciated a sweetheart; but just the same she reflected that few men had ever been noticeably "gone" on her.

Toby cared little or nothing for David, back home, whom she didn't know; but the maternal instinct deep within her—which she most promptly would have called by another name—told her that a marriage with the Black Sheep would be a very good thing for E. J. She liked Harvey; most people, men and women, did. He painted bad pictures and wrote worse verse, not to mention such minor accomplishments as opera scores, clay modeling and performances on a rare old violin; but on the other hand he possessed a motor-car which cost "more than nine hundred dollars," as Claudia excitedly put it, an independent fortune and a sister whose happy hunting-ground was Fifth Avenue. E. J., with only her charm, her tilted chin and heavenward glance, might do far, far worse. Burton looked romantic.

This was decided on after the young man had paid several visits to the Tower, and in season had been duly presented to Eve Masters and Shepherd. He talked more and looked less, on these other occasions, "as if he was getting used to the human zoo," Toby laughed. But as a matter of fact, Toby now felt his pleasant, boyish personality, that side of him which had won Chubby the first day at the studio and was destined to win the rest of them at the Tower in the days to come. Burton spent a good deal of his spare time on one floor or the other, and how he ever escaped moving his household goods into the building remains a mystery along with the Sphinx and the size of Claudia's gloves.

Perhaps the very plain fact that Burt—for it shortly developed into that, as if they couldn't let his name alone—didn't assume the rôle of lover with E. J. eased the situation a trifle, with Harvey as well as with Miss Lonsdell, for Toby was very busy just then and as often as not out of sorts with herself and the world when she came home from the office. Spring was in the air—Easter almost upon them; and "Ques-

tions and Answers" had expanded from one column to two. Never were so many people cursed with freckles before, it seemed, nor yet so many desirous of making over last year's skirts and blouses to conform with Dame Fashion's mandate for this. Likewise, many young men's fancies had lightly turned to thoughts of love. Especially "lightly" and more especially somebody's else love.

At the theater Claudia, who had caught "merry H." and expected dismissal from the company, was still hoping for a chance to play one of the worthwhile parts before the season drew to a close; but these chances grew slimmer every day, just as the audiences grew slimmer with the approach of roof gardens and iron steamboats.

Indeed, E. J. might well consider herself fortunate, up at the Aurora plant. They were still working on the Civil War feature—which would require eight weeks to film. For her work in this picture she was drawing fifty dollars a week, a generous remuneration for an amateur, perhaps, but little enough for the ingénue-lead.

In a costume play, like this Civil War confection, the company furnished the wardrobe; but in future features, in modern setting, E. J. was told that she would be expected to find her own clothes. At Toby's suggestion she was putting a little aside each week.

The aunts, back in Medford Center, received weekly communications from their niece and observed with satisfaction that she was carrying out "Uncle Randall's wishes to the letter." They said it was fine that she should be earning her own living in New York, although at first the "picture acting" had brought with it pursed lips and raised brows. But the Reverend Herbert, stopping by for tea at that moment, soon settled this delicate point for once and all; surely the aunts recalled the stereopticon views of "Joseph in the Land of Canaan," held in the Sunday-school rooms, last winter?

The girl's letters to David Holmes, while of weekly appearance, somehow left a sense of incompleteness. He was sorry to learn she had not gone into journalism, which was his own love, and that she had embraced the picture business. He heard of Toby and Claudia, of the Kute Kiddies and Eve and Glynn and the Black Sheep, but Burt colored few of those letters, which seemed to bring the bloom of Gotham even to slumbering Medford Center.

ONE Sunday afternoon, when Eve was entertaining, Morris Derringer, for whose "Blue Pierrot" Miss Masters had done the posters with E. J. as a model, presented himself, much to the consternation of the Tower. It was natural, perhaps, that Eve should connect his visit with her work, although Toby was as certain he had come to see E. J., while Claudia wondered audibly if it wasn't herself he was interested in.

Just as General Sherman was right about war, so was Miss Masters right about herself; Derringer had come to see her. He didn't need any costume plates; he didn't want to order any posters; but he was quite ready to talk "shop" with Miss Masters, whom he had correctly placed as a very clever young woman. Now was the time to pick up suggestions for his fall revue. Eve wasn't in the habit of letting marketable ideas fall promiscuously; nor was Morris Derringer a man to appropriate such trifles; and so, each understanding the other, commendable results were to be expected of their afternoon.

But Babel broke loose in earnest before the great man had been seated, balancing a cup of tea, ten minutes. They didn't disappear, one by one, like Andy Stewart's hair, for instance, but even Toby remained for the grand finish —displaying accomplishments until Derringer must have felt as if he had spent the afternoon at an amateur vaudeville, Eve protested. But he was very good about it, once he saw what he was in for—even patient and interested.

He remembered E. J. perfectly now, and listened gravely at her chatter of the studio. She was better than pretty, he decided, with the added attraction that she didn't want an engagement, such as Claudia so strenuously aimed at.

"But they'll ruin you for the stage, you know, these picture-studios," he told her. "They teach you to do everything

with your face to the east, like a churchyard full of tombstones. I'll wager you couldn't register despair with your back to the audience if your life depended on it, young lady."

"What would be the difference whether I could or not if my back was to the audience?" flashed E. J. with her famous smile.

"There would be your shoulders—'business of working shoulders'", he ventured, more to see what she would say next than anything else.

"But they're teaching me to be an actress, not Ruth St. Denis," was what the girl did say.

In the end, the fact was not to be denied that Morris Derringer was attracted most by the gayety and charm of E. J., yet he was willing to applaud Claudia's typically New York speech and manner, both unusually smart for this occasion, as well as Toby's undoubted cleverness. The afternoon, while it led to nothing definite, was, taken altogether, a huge success.

"He would give you an engagement to-morrow," Toby whispered to E. J., back in the quiet of their own tiny suite.

"I hope it will be many and many a day before I shall want an engagement," E. J. returned. "I'm a film, my dear. To-morrow we finish the Civil War, though scarcely according to history, and then—"

But just what the Aurora's next feature was to be, E. J. could only tell by quoting Chubby. For when "Hearts in Gray" was completed, Director Macklin regretted that the company wasn't prepared to offer Miss Adams a second engagement, though they would always bear her in mind, of course.

CHAPTER X

CHUBBY said that the news of E. J.'s dismissal struck him like a bolt from the blue, but since Chubby cherished literary aspirations, Toby forgave him his flowers of speech and listened with flattering interest to what he had to say. His explanation was this:

"Mack engaged E. J. for the Civil War feature, and she worked in that; but when it was finished and he was ready to begin a new picture which contained no suitable part for her, she was not reëngaged."

When E. J. first realized that she had lost suddenly and unexpectedly fifty dollars a week, cold fingers seemed to seize her in their icy grasp, and for a day or two she was in grave danger of losing her head. It meant so much to her, it meant so much to her, she kept saying over and over to herself.

TEN weeks had come and gone since E. J. had said good-by to the aunts and Medford Center, ten weeks that had sped. It was June. Most of the theaters were closed, and those that were open were occupied by musical comedy or revue. The piece in which Claudia acted was still on the boards, held there from week to week, partly through cut-rate tickets and partly through a desire to establish a record run which would be beneficial to the road tour next season. But E. J. knew that it couldn't hold out much longer, and then Claudia's salary would stop. That would never do. A sort of panic seized her.

Toby had suggested Morris Derringer, but at his Broadway offices E. J. was told that he was out of town; besides, there was nothing contemplated just at this time. The stage, plainly speaking, had always been the court of last resort to E. J., who knew that while moving pictures might be accepted in all good faith by Aunt Grace and Aunt Martha, these old ladies would never quite be able to forgive "play-acting." And she owed something to them.

But the picture studios held out little encouragement to the girl. One firm, with activities confined to California, asked if she would go to the Coast; another wanted only "names" and refused to give her a hearing; at a third plant she found a big stock company idle and uncertain, since the company was used to little things and this was the day of features. That the Aurora had dispensed with her services after one picture was a great stumbling-block.

As the days grew warmer, worry and heat began to leave their marks on the

girl. The second week in June, Claudia's play closed its season, and while this had been expected weekly for the past month, it seemed in nowise to lessen Miss Rey's audible grief. She speculated publicly on her chances for marrying money or inheriting a fortune or finding a Kohinoor, dreams that we all of us dream in our youth, and smile over afterward. But the Tower seemed to have forgotten how to smile, these late spring days. Only Eve Masters was in funds, it seemed. The Maison Rosalie had closed its doors until September, which considerably curtailed the income of the Kute Kiddies, and the Poet and Peasant lugged about with him a white elephant in the shape of an original comic-opera book.

"The dog-days are upon us!" cried Miss Lonsdell dramatically, in a manner which made E. J. think of *The Lady of Shalott*. She wanted to laugh, even at Toby, and so she did—and it somehow made her feel better and proved that she had kept her sense of humor unimpaired through it all.

She had always exercised a great attraction for Harvey Shepherd, and in the days that followed, he and E. J. were thrown a great deal together. He was going to join his sister at their seaside place in July, and even now he was ready for a little holiday with E. J., proposing numerous motor-trips which Toby Lonsdell encouraged, perhaps with secret ambitions.

But E. J. was made of sterner stuff than even Toby dreamed; and then, of course, Miss Lonsdell knew nothing about Uncle Randall's trust. The girl longed to confide in her, but after some thought on the subject couldn't clearly see her way to such a confidence. She must fight this fight alone, asking no quarter, winning or losing through her own efforts. Only—she didn't intend to lose.

WHILE they were over on Broadway one afternoon, Harvey espied the gaudy posters announcing Macklin's "Hearts in Gray," which was then running at one of the large cinema theaters. It was like him to propose a party for that night, but E. J., without knowing why, save that she did, pleaded quickly to go in at once and see it, just they two together. Another man's vanity might have been tickled by such a suggestion; but Shepherd, though he insisted upon painting and writing and composing, was blessed with brain as well as brawn, and he knew that it was not coquetry which prompted E. J.'s speech.

They went inside. An organ's rich voice boomed through the artificial twilight; already the figures were dancing across the screen, men and women E. J. had met during her brief stay at the Aurora plant. A battle scene, made beyond the Palisades, loomed almost brutal in its effectiveness. E. J. sank down in her chair beside Harvey, scarcely breathing.

When Burton George first flashed upon the screen, it found her tense, with nerves tingling. It seemed so real, too real, even closer and more vivid than she and Harvey Shepherd, sitting quietly in this darkened theater. This was part of her; she felt, somehow, that Andrew Stewart must feel the same way about his verses when he saw them in print, or Eve when her drawings smiled back at her from the cover of some magazine.

"Burt's a good-looking beggar," said the Black Sheep, not contemptuously or begrudgingly, but with something like a man's admiration for a pal and fellow-man.

"Only he's not a beggar," E. J. answered under her breath. "He's got an engagement."

It was not until the battles had been won, and the hero had returned to his Virginia home, that E. J. made her reappearance. A "flash" of her revealed a strikingly pretty girl in crinoline, poke bonnet and silk mitts, but unlike Burt, E. J. did not look her best in character. This is what Harvey couldn't understand. Even to his inexperienced eye it was plain that the man was going to be out of his element in modern drama, while the girl, by some strange freak, considering her life in Medford Center, was as distinctly to-day and New York as if she had first opened her eyes in the shadow of the Times Tower.

"It is all so—creepy," she said with a nervous laugh as she watched herself upon the screen. "I suppose, like *Cin-*

derella, I should say 'This can't be I;' and yet, of course, it is! It's a beautiful picture, isn't it? Leaving my share cut—"

"It's a beautiful picture," said the Black Sheep quietly.

For a second tears were perilously near the surface. Perhaps none of them would understand, but she had loved this picture, had been so proud! Now her name wasn't even mentioned in the cast, since the Aurora wasn't going to enhance her value by advertising when she was no longer with them and was seeking an affiliation with another company. Every hour spent at work had been a joy; a sense of possession had gone into the making.

"I guess I'm very bad," she said a minute later as she watched herself go through a scene.

The result wasn't exactly satisfactory to Harvey's artistic taste, and he asked her about the director, wondering if the fault lay with him.

"Mr. Macklin!" E. J.'s loyalty was fired at the suggestion. "He is one of the best, one of the really big men. You know, he had two amateurs to deal with in this production—although Burt handles himself like a veteran; you must admit that."

Harvey had to acknowledge that Burton was very effective.

"Something's wrong, though perhaps it isn't the direction. But you look—awkward, E. J., because you are posed awkwardly; it's not altogether your fault, in my humble estimation, that your work misses fire in this picture." They had decided that point a moment ago: E. J.'s delineation was a trifle off the key. "There! Burt has turned your back to the camera," he added later.

"Burt is Macklin's discovery, his 'wonder-boy,'" returned E. J. a bit wearily. "Of course, if one of us had to be sacrificed, it was I; you must see that, Black Sheep. Let's cut the rest."

CHAPTER XI

AN interest in life and living, and incidentally self, had been revived within the four walls of the Tower of Babel by Eve Masters, in E. J.'s absence. And that Eve herself was a trifle excited was perhaps best shown in her face, of which only one half was made up in her Pierrotlike white and pinkness. As for Claudia, she was altogether kittenish once more, and talked clothes with the recklessness of a vaudeville headliner.

Eve had taken a tiny cottage on Long Island for July and August.

"It's only as large as a powder-puff," she explained, but E. J. thought her eyes gleamed a trifle wildly. "There are three bedrooms and a strip of beach. I'm not sure, however, if it's a tree or a pump in the bit of garden. You'll all come down?"

"To-morrow—and remain indefinitely," promised Claudia, fondly beaming.

"What in the kingdom of cats are we coming to when the Tower rents a cottage for the summer!" ejaculated Chubby, stroking his beardless chin. "More power to you, Eve! How is it I married Ivy and not you, O Hetty Green?"

There was a little roof-garden they had set out on the top of the Tower. Everyone had contributed to this garden, if only a rubber plant, which Miss Lonsdell acclaimed as her family tree, or a pair of grass mats. The border of scarlet geraniums topping the parapet was Harvey's donation; Eve had given two hammocks, and Claudia the Chinese lantern. You reached this paradise by way of a ladder through a skylight, and you came armed with a pillow to sit on if you were unfortunate enough to arrive after the wicker chairs and hammocks had been appropriated. Ivy made a habit of claiming the most comfortable hammock every clear evening as early as seven o'clock, so that when Chubby put in his appearance at ten, after writing three hours, there were sumptuous quarters reserved for her diminutive lord.

After supper that night Harvey helped E. J. through the trapdoor to the roof, to find Mrs. Lyn, as usual, usurping the khaki throne, with her violin hugged in her arms.

"Chubby will be up presently; Chubby's turning his novel into a scenario—they're easier to place," she piped, to a

screechy accompaniment on the instrument.

"It doesn't matter, my dear Ivy." The Black Sheep's laugh came back to her as he escorted E. J. to the far end of the roof.

"Ivy is a dear, and her devotion to Chubby is a joy to see," E. J. said, as they stood blinking out at the lights of Broadway. "Somehow I feel as if I had known you folk all my life; you're much more real and vital than the people I grew up with, people I've known all my life. What a wonderful thing for me that *The Berkshire Star* ran 'Questions and Answers.' That's the way I found Toby, you know."

He had heard about it; it was almost history in the Tower.

"I've been from Nome to the Horn, and from Japan to Forty-second Street, and I like Bohemia best of all the countries I have seen, and the Towerites best of all the people I have met." The grave smile in his eyes saved this speech from bombast; the Black Sheep was straight and open and sincere always. "They're dandy boys and girls," he said.

E. J. gave a delicious little sigh.

"I want to stay here. If I could only find work!" she cried. "Uncle Toby says in his column that hope springs eternal; well, I wish it would catch me in a strangle-hold! I'm willing, I'm eager; I—I've got to succeed!"

Ivy, in a dangerous position, was fiddling Offenbach's "Barcarolle"—in an alien key. She even attempted vocal exercise to it.

HARVEY rested one elbow on the green geranium-boxes, and sank his voice—although this was quite unnecessary with Ivy present.

"E. J.," he said, "why should you struggle like this? You're fretting yourself away to a shadow."

"Oh, Harvey!" She laughed. "I must have gained at least a pound since I've been in New York, and that, of course, is enough to make any girl fret. But work, you mean!" She sighed and shook her head. "You don't know," she said. He didn't, and she couldn't explain. "I like work for its own sake, I think," she went on. "I like to do, to feel that I am of some use, to be part of the great game of life. I could never sit quietly down in a corner, with folded hands. Even books, except when I was back home in dead-alive Medford, and they were stories of New York, never held me as they do some girls. I wanted to be here, in it, not idly looking on."

There was a light in her eyes, a flush on her cheeks. In the glow of Claudia's lanterns the man saw the slightly parted lips, the glory of youth which enveloped her like a mantle.

"My dear," he said, his voice not quite steady, "I love you!"

"Oh, Black Sheep!" She gave a little low cry as she faced him, pity in her eyes. "Don't spoil it all!"

In that one glance, that brief speech, he read his doom.

"I love you," he repeated in a lower, slower tone. "If you'll marry me, there isn't anything—anything—" He stopped, abashed by what he saw in her face. "Forgive me," he pleaded quickly, looking away.

"It is unsaid, dear boy," she returned, resting her fingers lightly on his arm. "I think you are simply fine, Black Sheep, but—you are not my man." It was her turn now to glance away, to pierce the darkness which lay beyond the glitter of Broadway in the east. "When I came here to live, I told Toby about—a man back home, about David."

He remembered him, but somehow, in New York, a home-town sweetheart seems farther away than the crack o' doom. Harvey had never bothered his head especially over the existence of David.

"But you can't go back to Medford now, and content yourself with planning a little country newspaper," he said after a silence.

Now her eyes met his, smiling slightly.

"A woman can content herself anywhere in this old world with the man who is her man," she told him.

CHAPTER XII

A LITTLE later in the evening Burt came running up with a trade journal containing a criticism of "Hearts in Gray" and the infor-

mation that the feature was on view over at the Strand. At once everybody was wild to see the picture, and so both E. J. and Harvey found themselves saying nothing that would interrupt the hastily planned jaunt. But the memory of the afternoon seemed to bear the girl down, and she wondered if she could stand that hour again. Yet she was anxious to have Toby see it—Toby, who was so dreadfully keen.

They journeyed over to Broadway in a body, Toby comparing it with Sherman's famous march to the sea, and then quickly begging everybody to consider it unsaid, since she was "crushed" for the evening.

"Quite ready for an immortelle shower," she added, sighing.

Upon their arrival at the theater there ensued a general confusion during which everybody counted out money and borrowed and lent to "make up" the required amount, with that utter disregard for environment which characterized their lives.

"The gallery's a quarter, and we'll each pay for ourself," said Claudia.

"Only the box-office says there are no quarter seats left," Ivy cried excitedly. "Besides, I haven't got but a dime with me. I thought—"

It would have meant only a genuine pleasure to Harvey Shepherd to have purchased seats for the crowd, but this wasn't according to the Tower of Babel standards, and he knew it. Because one happened to be a man and another a woman made practically no difference at all, since they were all workers, and pals, not sweethearts. Even Chubby and Ivy had separate pocketbooks.

More money-lending followed, until Broadway resembled "The Merchant of Venice," Miss Lonsdell intimated. But at last they were inside, groping in the darkness for their seats.

It was not until they were fixed, and the rest of them absorbed in the wordless play being enacted before them, that E. J. realized that the person next to whom she was sitting was Burt. As she looked at him, leaning a little forward in his chair, his dark eyes, no longer sullen, following the action with a sort of breathless interest, she was reminded of that day in Macklin's office. Just what she thought, just what was in her brain, E. J. didn't guess, but the scene and his words kept recurring with stubborn persistence. She watched him, instead of the screen, with dull wonderment.

That he was not wholly pleased with what he saw was evident, and that at times he was stirred more deeply than he realized was proved by the tense expression with which he followed the play.

E. J. glanced at the screen then to make note of the scene which carried him so out of the darkened theater. It was a short scene between herself and him, a scene which somehow she had felt was all wrong. The heroine had been sacrificed for the hero—who was of course the star; and E. J. saw an awkward, untrained girl in a tense, dramatic moment.

"I suppose this is what Burns meant when he spoke of seeing ourselves as others see us," she thought with a tinge of regret. The feeling was not unlike that known to a drowning man, wishing he might have his life to live over again. "I am bad, just bad. Macklin was right to let me go."

She was always fair; she was a tyrant for fairness, Toby said.

THERE followed a reel of scenes of battle which thrilled Burton less, perhaps; for he sat back, and presently he looked about him like a sleeper coming out of a dream. It was then he recognized E. J.

"I didn't know—"

"No, you were quite carried away by it all." She smiled.

He seemed to hesitate.

"I saw it before, in the projection-room at the plant, you know," he said after a moment. "It's different with music and audience, I reckon."

"You sound like 'Hearts in Gray' when you say 'reckon,'" she smiled; and he flushed and drew back.

"It's provincial, I know."

More battle,—men, horses, cannon, —then a "close-up" so clear that it seemed a colossal Burton peering at them from the screen. The man seemed to cringe.

"I hate that!" he muttered.

"This picture ought to make you, Burt," she replied.

"I hate pictures." He scowled at the sheet. "But there is so little I can do—nothing else, in fact, I suppose. I didn't know which way to turn when I saw an advertisement for extra people up at the Aurora studio. Mack gave me a job, said I was a type, and now comes this." The frown deepened on his youthful brow.

"But 'this' is like finding money, inheriting a fortune," she encouraged him with. "I wish Macklin had discovered something worth while in me; I would have been glad to stay."

Burt was silent.

"You feel a bit conscious of yourself now, like a boy in his first long trousers," she went on. Indeed, he seemed very boyish. She recalled the sullen eyes, that first day at the studio, and the silent lips when first he sat in the Kute Kiddies' living-room. Something had gone wrong with him. She was woman enough to know a big desire to help him straighten out life's puzzle. "I am proud of you," she said after a moment, "proud because you, an amateur like myself, succeeded where I failed. And I felt so sure! It was the chance I had been waiting for, you see, and I threw my heart and soul into my work. It meant—it meant a lot to me, that chance! But I'm glad for you, and proud, just the same."

He twitched uncomfortably in his chair, finally sinking back, his head down.

"Stop it!" he muttered. "Oh, good Lord!"

"So you've got to go on if only to justify my faith and pride in you, Burt," she said brightly.

"I never want to see the inside of a studio again," he said between his teeth. "It seems—degrading in a man who can't act, who has no talent for such work. Macklin took me; I know. He wants to advertise me. He says—good Lord!—that the girls will like me. I don't want girls to like me; I hate girls. I hate everything, everybody, myself most of all!"

At that moment, perhaps fortunately, the picture came to a close to the magic strains of "Dixie," and once out of the theater into the summer life of Broadway, life became less strenuous, grief less poignant.

But that night as E. J. lay in bed awake, a voice came to her, bringing with it knowledge, as she heard again that slight drawl from Burt which somehow confirmed her suspicion of his identity.

CHAPTER XIII

CLAUDIA had been known to protest that every chance in the world was given to E. J. to make good, while she, though longest among them, was promptly forgotten and relegated to the rear. The fact that Claudia had been longer among them was exactly the reason why the Tower was less enthusiastic about her advancement. In the two years she had been in New York, Claudia must have known a dozen golden opportunities—all of which had slipped by. Now it was E. J.'s turn, and the plums picked up were turned over to her. Thus it happened that Eve Masters, calling E. J. into her studio one morning, whispered that Morris Derringer was getting together a stock company to try out new material, in one of the larger Connecticut cities.

"See Derry himself and nail a job," counseled the artist. "I don't see why you can't make it, and there's no doubt in my mind but that it's a live chance for the right girl. You see, in all these plays he's going to produce there must be one worthy of a Broadway hearing, and if you make any impression at all, you'll likely enough get a shot at the part in New York."

"Eve, you're a jewel!" cried E. J. rapturously. The idea of the stage was not altogether alluring, for she remembered the aunts; but certainly Miss Masters meant it in all kindness.

"All right, honey, I'm a jewel," said Eve with a mischievous smile; "only, don't make it a garnet, will you? Or are garnets jewels?" There were always sly digs at the ring E. J. wore, but she knew quite well there wasn't an ounce of malice in them all. "Hurry now, and good luck," were the artist's parting words.

She went away warmed by the

thought that these people cared. Yet even as she retraced her steps toward Broadway, after a wild goose chase to a picture corporation over on the East Side, E. J. was struck afresh by the thought that the theater was not for her.

TOWARD one o'clock, undecided whether to go home to lunch or to patronize a little French coffee-shop, where a dime loomed as large as a cart-wheel, E. J. happened to see Burt come out of Thirty-ninth Street, by the Casino. Burt hadn't been to the Tower since the night they went to see "Hearts in Gray," the night, when, like a flash, E. J. had divined the truth. And though Chubby reported that Macklin kept the wonder-boy pretty busy these days, his wholesale desertion had not escaped comment, for he had been made one of them.

E. J. had wanted to see Burt, but it was not her aim to force his hand. He must find the way alone. That is what she hoped for. Truth ceases to be truth when a person is cornered, and confession is the lone avenue of escape. That he should come to her of his own free will and say what she wanted to hear—that was her dream; for Burt was a dream and not a nightmare, in spite of all.

For a moment it appeared as if he meant to avoid her this afternoon, but this was not her way. She let no opportunity pass.

"Burt!" She caught him by the coat-sleeve as she called his name, the old spirit of good fellowship firing her eyes. Neither by word or look did she betray herself. He looked worn, she thought; pity, not hatred, stirred her heart. "Are you off to the rainbow's end, old fellow, that you don't see a pal?" she cried as he paused.

"Hello!" But he was never a good actor away from the camera, regardless of Macklin's opinion before it. "Glad you caught me—what luck! How's everything?"

"Why don't you come up and see?"

He hung his head and muttered something about business.

"The Tower misses you," she persisted after a brief silence. "Ivy is learning 'The Meditation from Thaïs,' and Claudia is gazing screenward with longing eyes."

"And you?" he asked, facing her suddenly.

"Still hunting a chance to spoil a second feature," she told him with the ghost of a smile as they fell into step.

HE knew that her finances must be in a sorry state, yet she didn't look like a person who was defeated. He didn't mean her frock and hat—the flattest pocketbooks are often found in the most stunning clothes—but her air, her voice, her eyes. None of these acknowledged defeat. A quick frown came over his face like an April thundercloud. With work, which it seemed was all this girl asked of life, he could not smile calmly back at the world as she did.

"I'm off to Rhode Island this afternoon for a few days," he told her after a moment or two. "Just finishing up a picture that requires the sea; and Mack, you know, is a bear for atmosphere. Wont have Sheepshead at any price."

"I love the sea," murmured E. J. "I'm crazy to go down to Eve's little house for a week. You must come too; they said you weren't."

"I'm afraid I can't." The frown returned.

"But Eve will never forgive you, Burt. It's going to be loads of fun; we're all going down in a body, and there're only two bedrooms, and not three at all, it seems. It's going to be like a picnic, without earwigs and lunch-boxes. And there's the sea, or is it the Sound?"

Her enthusiasm was infectious, even while her pretty gayety stabbed him again and again. It took such a little to make her merry; her world was all shot through with color of rose! Well, why not? He set his jaws, forcing back the answering light response which rushed to his lips.

"I can't promise; I'll have to see," was all he would say.

They went to lunch together, to the little coffee-shop, since E. J. declared a dime was her limit, and of course she refused his invitation.

"Don't spoil me," she said with her crisp laugh. "Really, these buns and delicious coffee are all I want; I must

keep my figure even as you may keep your bank-roll. Going to Watch Hill, eh?" She mused a moment. "I was told that Morris Derringer wanted people for a stock company, up in Connecticut, this morning."

"Did you see him?" asked Burt with a show of interest.

"Not yet. I'm going to offer my valuable services to the Remus Company this afternoon; they are the last on my list. If they turn me flat, I suppose it means Derringer in the morning. Frankly, I'm not crazy about the theater, because—well, because I'm not. But I must find work of some sort." She watched him closely as she said this.

"A woman's place is in the home," Burt retorted in harsh accents.

"Go 'long!" she cried. "Somebody said home is a place to go to when there's nothing left to do, and I'm not one to cry quits so easily, I'll promise you. Toby says home is a place to grab when your complexion goes back on you and a man comes along with a wedding-ring. They're wrong. I've my own definition of home, which I sha'n't tell you now, but at least it's far from failure. Seriously, Burt, I wont stay down, and if Mr. Remus refuses to be convinced, then I shall try for the legit'."

They had been sitting at their little marble-topped table for more than half an hour. Burt glanced at his watch and muttered something about trains, but it was nearly two o'clock, and E. J. also had to be hurrying along. They said good-by outside the door, Burt promising to "think over" Eve Masters' house-party.

THE REMUS COMPANY, a mushroom corporation with a stock-selling proposition, offered no opportunities at all for a girl like E. J. It seemed useless to hang around the dingy office waiting to see the head, but her chances were growing pretty slim by this time, and E. J. was not a person to let a possibility slip through her fingers. Eventually she saw the right man, and while her own judgment was confirmed, she felt better for having waited, just the same.

It was, then, after four o'clock when she found herself again on Broadway, with Morris Derringer's address on her lips. He had his own theater in Forty-second Street, as well as a music hall further up Broadway, but it was at the theater she knew she would find him. The only thing that worried her was the fear he had already gone home.

This she found was the case, when she entered his office, for Derringer with his family was living down on Long Island during the hot weather, and he commuted, much to his disgust but his family's benefit.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" cried E. J., taken back in spite of the suspicion which had entered her breast as she came up the stairs. "I am sure he would have seen me; it was about the stock company, up in Hartford."

Morris' younger brother was sympathetic and displayed it in his interest. Leo Derringer was less than thirty, and was his famous brother's henchman, just learning the theatrical business, yet knowing all of Morris' plans. He was quite willing to be made use of by this striking girl with the air that was neither of Broadway nor the hinterland.

"If it's Hartford, I'm sorry, for we're all filled," he said. "The last vacancy was supplied to-day—this afternoon."

"This afternoon!"

"Just before my brother left the office."

"What was it?" asked E. J. "I mean, would I—"

"Of course Mr. Derringer makes all engagements, and this was sort of—special," said Leo. "But I think—yes, it was ingénue-lead, Miss Adams."

Somehow the stage seemed inexpressibly dear, now that such a golden opportunity had escaped her. E. J. could scarcely suppress a sigh. She left her card, "in case anything turned up"—hoping, too, that Morris would recognize the name and recall the girl. And she walked away with just a little nod for Leo. But he was much impressed, and he hoped Derry could do something for this girl. He was quite young.

FIVE o'clock had passed when E. J. turned into the Tower and waited thoughtfully while Charon brought

Rozinante down to get her. There was a new elevator installed now, but it was still a "miserable nag," for Toby's nicknames had a way of sticking. The boy was proud as he carried E. J. to her floor without a "single hitch." Toby said that formerly he must have expected sudden death at every turn of the wheel.

Miss Lonsdell wasn't home yet, but E. J. found Claudia and Ivy, both very much excited, turning out trunks and drawers, while every visible article of furniture was festooned with various pieces of apparel.

"Oh, Lord!" gasped E. J. from the door. She was a little tired and more than a little disappointed.

Claudia looked up and seeing the intruder, beckoned furiously.

"The most wonderful thing, babe!" she cooed. "I am going to Hartford, to play in stock for that dear Derry—seventy-five beans and real lines to speak. At least, I think I'm going." She stopped short, frowning.

E. J. came quickly into the room, her face suddenly white and tense.

"Going to Hartford, Claudia, for Derringer's stock?"

"Yes. Aren't I the fortunate thing?"

"You are indeed."

"Who put you on, Claude?" E. J. asked a moment later.

"An old friend, Tom Huntley, called me up while I was home to lunch; wasn't I lucky he caught me? I had almost forgotten about Tom until the other night I recognized him on the screen in 'Hearts in Gray.' We were great old pals two years ago, though. He advised me to go right over and see Derry, and you'd better believe I let no moss grow under my Trilbies. It's a wonderful chance, if—"

"If—what?" E. J. forced herself to say. She felt strangely numb and cold.

"Well, you see, I'll have to have a wardrobe; you have to furnish your clothes in stock, honey. And I haven't a rag that's fit to wear to a down-home church supper." Discontent marred her pretty face; she beat one palm fiercely with the fist of her other hand. "I'll just have to have two hundred dollars," she said. "My—my reason depends on it."

CLAUDIA walked the length of the utility room. "I can squeeze along with two hundred dollars," she repeated. "The management furnished my wardrobe with Grainger; I was merely the understudy, and never got a smell at the part. But I've never played stock, and I haven't a decent gown, nor hat, nor shoes."

"Poor honey! What are you going to do about it?" lisped Ivy. She was sweetly sympathetic, while E. J. said nothing, standing still against the table, her gloves still on her hot, damp hands.

She had neither money to squander nor wardrobe to dazzle, but she felt if this engagement lay in the hollow of her hand she would grasp it, without regrets, without whining, and win out somehow. Toby rather expressed her point of view, when, coming in in the midst of Miss Rey's lamentations, she said crisply:

"You've got a Rolls-Royce appetite on a Foolish Four income, Claude. You say you've landed the job; well, that's the main thing. We'll fit you out between us, somehow or other."

"But I don't want to be fitted out *somehow,*" protested Claudia. "This is a wonderful chance, and I am going among strange men and women. Gosh, if this isn't just my regular luck right straight along!"

"Poor honey!" lisped Ivy afresh.

Miss Lonsdell took off her hat and spoke to the canary in his cage in the window. Then she noticed E. J., still silent, just as she had come in from the street. "Hello, *Melpomene,* and who stole your candy?" she cried.

E. J. forced a smile as she turned away to go into the bedroom.

"I was thinking, and my thoughts can't be bought with a penny, so don't bid recklessly," she said; and then she was gone.

Toby looked after her with narrowed, questioning eyes. Her rôle in the Tower had gradually developed into that of mother-hen, and more often than not she was occupying herself with her scratching brood. She had grown a little hardened to Claudia's cry of distress, but the bitterness that seared and burned was new to E. J.

She turned, a question on her lips, to

the two other girls, but either they had failed to notice anything amiss, or else they were miles away in Hartford, and Toby shrewdly left unspoken her ominous thoughts. Quietly she followed into the bedroom.

E. J. quickly raised her head from the pillow as she heard the door open and close, but it was only Toby after all, and so E. J. sat up and began to take off her shoes.

MISS LONSDELL, at the mirror, had let down her very short, very thin hair and stood regarding her rather unlovely visage in the glass with mock tragic mien. She was ever ready to sacrifice herself on the altar of friendship, and surely to-night E. J. was in the depths.

"Love Luke!" She gave a little grunt and ran her fingers through her scanty tresses. "When I was growing up, folks used to say not 'What a pretty child she is!' but 'How intelligent the little darling looks!' Will somebody please step forward and tell me what are the marks of intelligence in a full-grown young female? Are they a mangy coiffure? a too-pale eye? a hand which makes one accept the South Sea Island custom of wearing rings in the nose? Two things I've wanted all my life long are a paradise osprey and lots of silk stockings—something that costs more than a dollar a pair, you know; yet I am convinced that a veil and wool leggings would gain me even more flirtatious glances. Life is short and art is long, eh? Believe me, Uncle Toby would prefer more liveliness and less artistry for hers!"

A smile crept into E. J.'s face.

"You know you think you're clever," she said.

"You know I think it! Well, I think I know it!" Miss Lonsdell returned warmly. "To-day alone I've advised what to wear to a clambake and how to conduct oneself at an ex-fiancé's wedding, when to return a party-call and where to submit scenarios. Then there were recipes for chicken salad, nut sundaes and freckle lotions; I settled a bridge dispute and printed 'Orphan Annie's Prayer.' I resuscitated an asphyxiated man—although I hope he wasn't in a state of coma from the time the question was mailed until the day I answered it. Then, of course, I 'won back' a half-hundred wayward *hims* for an equal number of lovelorn *hers*. Oh, yes, and 'a prune a day keeps the doctor away.'"

"Oh, Toby, you're such a fool, such a dear fool, of course!" E. J. cried. "But somehow you take us out of ourselves, show us the smile where before there was only a tear."

"I'm sure I'm not asking you either to laugh or cry at me!"

"You'll be getting me mixed up like Ivy in a minute. I was so down in the mouth, heartsick!"

"Uncle Toby can prescribe for that too."

"You have, indeed you have! You see, Claudia beat me to a job I thought was a sure thing."

"And you felt sorry for yourself when you heard your swan-song." Suddenly she was serious, all the clowning and flippancy disappearing as if by magic. "I'd rather hear a girl ask for bichloride than hear her acknowledge that she was sorry for herself and mean it. The one is not a bit more deadly. And it leaves you with more self-respect, I think. There ought to be a line in the Litany: 'From self-pity, good Lord, deliver us.' I guess that will be about all from Billy Sunday."

THAT Miss Rey had set her heart on a replenished wardrobe was made manifest that night.

"If I don't get the things I need—actually need, mind you—I wont go to Hartford," declared Claudia ultimately.

E. J.'s innate love of fairness made it rather hard for her to see Claudia denied, but Eve Masters explained the situation a trifle more closely than Toby would have done—much of this explanation, by the way, being for Toby's sake.

"It would not be doing Claude any real kindness to let her have this money even if we were rolling in wealth, which we are not. Hartford is not Broadway, you know. While the wardrobe we can scrape together for her wont draw any delighted 'ah's!' from the audiences, perhaps, it will answer its purpose very

well. It's her ability, not her clothes, that will count with Morris Derringer in this experiment. If she makes good and gets a contract for next season, I'll wager she'll get the necessary wardrobe, all right. But now—well, I guess there are other things than hats and gowns fretting her now."

"What do you mean?" asked E. J., although she had her own ideas on the subject.

"I mean that awful bluffer Quin Glynn—sounds like a Chinese laundry." Eve stopped to laugh although she was really provoked. "You know, he's not coming down to me for our week in July. He says he's accepted an invitation to spend the month with Cherry Bough, who's giving a large house-party, down at 'Sconsett."

"And Claudia cares for Quin?"

"I think she does," said Toby after a pause. "But she wont marry him, because he's poor. I'm afraid the pair of them are jellyfish; each craves the luxury of wealth without working for it. Even *Tommy Tucker* had to sing for his supper, you remember."

CHAPTER XIV

ON Monday the Tower was "sojourning" on Long Island. Eve had gone down on Saturday with Toby, but the Derringer proposition still held Claudia in town, and E. J. said she would remain with her until things were settled. Ivy was waiting for Chubby to return from Watch Hill, late Sunday night; with him and Andrew and Burt the girls would set out early Monday morning for their week with the "affluent one."

Harvey had gone away for the week-end, to his sister, but would show up sometime Monday at the "Garden of Eden;" and while the Poet and Peasant was at home, E. J. looked forward to a rather colorless Sunday. Yet she insisted upon remaining with Claudia.

There is practically nothing to do in New York on Saturday in midsummer but get out of town. E. J. didn't even bother to dress and go over to Broadway, for she knew that most people she wanted to see were invisible to-day. The morning was spent in letter-writing, to the aunts and to David. The visit to Long Island was spoken of as her "vacation, for a week only, and then back to work."

CLAUDIA came in about one o'clock, rather to E. J.'s surprise, for she hadn't expected her until supper-time, when Ivy had planned to join them. But here Claudia was, and a highly nervous and excited Claudia at that. She didn't even wait to take off her hat before she began:

"You know I need two hundred dollars, E. J.; you will have to lend me the money."

The surprise on the face of the other girl was quite genuine, as her mind tried to grasp the possibilities of this speech.

"Why, Claudia!"

"Don't Claudia me." She was trembling with emotion. "I want that money, and I've got to have it. I don't know how you can be so two-faced, so—so mean! This is a matter of life and death with me. My whole future hangs on this engagement with Derringer. And I can't accept it without clothes—not ribbons and laces, as Toby and Eve pretend to think, but clothes. I've got to have that money."

E. J. had a chance to think, but scarcely to act during this speech. One item rose paramount: what did Claudia know?

"But I haven't got two hundred dollars to lend you," she said at last, as the other made an impatient gesture at the delay. "Had I the money to lend, you would have had it before this."

"What an ugly lie!" cried Claudia with a short laugh.

"It is the truth," protested E. J. "If I had got this engagement instead of you, Claudia, I would have had to go to Hartford with just the wardrobe that is offered you. More, I will be glad to go with such a wardrobe."

Claudia took off her hat and threw it down among E. J.'s letters.

"I don't believe you," she said distinctly. "I don't believe a word you say. This is not a game with me, not a whim because I am tired of ease and luxury and want to play in Bohemiana. I have got to work!"

"Then why don't you do it?" E. J. demanded, in the cutting cold of her New England brain. "You're all talk; you want to do that, and you've got to do this; yet you don't do: you talk. As for luxury you speak of, I've known more real comfort and happiness in these little rooms than ever before in my life."

Claudia only smiled.

"I think we're getting off our subject," she said. "I wasn't speaking of the delightful advantages of the Tower, nor the luxurious fittings of this studio-apartment, but of money—two hundred dollars. I shall brand you as the most ungrateful girl in New York if you don't lend me that sum. I don't ask you to give it me, although you'd never miss it; but I do demand that you lend me the money until I can pay it back—and I will, every penny of it. Well?"

The aunts had learned in infancy that E. J. could never be driven, never bullied into a thing; and now she stood straight against a table with that expression on her face which Medford knew so well. She was as hard as nails, at that moment. Even Claudia, facing her, cringed.

"I haven't the money to lend you," she repeated, and each word seemed to come separately and fall like an icicle, "but if I had it to lend, I wouldn't give you a cent. Neither shall I ever forgive you for the things you have said to me to-day."

"We took you in—we made you one of us!"

"You have been wonderful; yet your kindness neither justifies this attack of yours nor squares the debt I owe my friends. Somebody has been telling you things about which they knew nothing, or else you have stumbled upon something which you should never have attempted to elaborate. You come to me like a creature in a melodrama, and you threaten and shout—but to no avail as far as I am concerned. I am telling you the truth when I say I may not lend you two hundred dollars, and that is the last word I shall say on the subject. If there is anything Toby wants to know, then there is something more to be said—to her, but not to you."

She turned quietly and went into the bedroom, closing the door; but once alone she had to sit down, for she was shaking like a leaf.

REALIZATION that she had reached a crisis which might mean disaster to her hopes and plans forced itself upon her then, for she could never dismiss Toby as she had dismissed Claudia; Toby would have to know the truth. She hoped she was not ungrateful—it was a word that stuck, with E. J. The Tower had behaved handsomely to her, but all their kindness didn't wipe out this one girl's attack, nor ease the pain which her words inflicted. Alone, the memory of them stabbed like knife-thrusts. It would only be opening these wounds to confess to Toby.

Yet Toby, above and beyond all others, must be told; and she, playing judge and jury, must decide the lack of gratitude which was E. J.'s. First, however, E. J. must ascertain how Claudia had learned about the money.

A search of the apartment revealed no trace of Claudia, however, and E. J. arrived at the conclusion that she had taken herself out again, since there was no ally to confide in at home to-day. But in the living-room, stuck up on the mirror above the mantel, where it was impossible to be overlooked, was a scrap of paper which at once attracted E. J.'s eye.

The unsigned communication was typewritten.

> Go to E. J. Adams for the money you require. Recently she inherited a fortune, and is among you in disguise.

Before this document the girl stood immovable, as if turned to stone, and her eyes, as if fascinated with what they saw, remained glued to the anonymous letter. Then, with rising color, and a low little cry which she couldn't keep back, E. J. snatched the thing from the glass, and throwing it from her, upon the floor, set her heel upon it.

"This is more than I can stand!" she moaned. "What a damnable trick to do!"

Yet she had recovered sufficiently within a few minutes to pick up the note and place it back in the mirror.

It wasn't hers, and since it wasn't, she had no more right to remove it from where Claudia had placed it than she had to pillage Claudia's bureau. It was there for the world and his wife to see; then they must see it.

A footstep in the corridor attracted her, and she went quickly to the door, expecting Claudia. Recalling what Eve had said to her, E. J. knew that the girl was only a jellyfish, but like many of her kind, she had the power to sting those she touched, as E. J. had reason to know. But it was not Miss Rey whom she found in the corridor. Masculine heels vanishing around the corner confirmed her suspicions, and E. J. hurried after the truant, while her active mind seized new weapons to wield.

"Burt!" she cried when she came in sight of him standing by the elevator. "Oh, has Chubby come home too? Then we could go down to Long Island this afternoon!"

THERE was no responsive smile on the face he turned to greet her. Of late he seemed to have lost that sullen expression which E. J. had grown more and more to fear and loathe as the outward and visible sign of secret weakness; but now it was back again with all its old force, combined with a new stubbornness which filled her with alarm. Burt was weak; she had guessed that before. But it seemed too terrible that he should be vicious with it. It was this she must fight, this she had to vanquish. The thought of his weakness seemed to rekindle her strength, and lend her courage.

"Come in and talk to me for a few minutes," she said, leading the way back to the apartment.

"How did you know it was I?" he asked suspiciously, refusing to budge.

"I thought it was Claudia," she replied, and he read in her eyes that she spoke the truth. "Do come."

He followed her to the living-room door.

"Chubby didn't come down with me," he said then; "and I've got to get up to the studio. We can't go down to Long Island to-day."

"Not without Chubby—of course not!"

Burt followed her across the threshold, and almost the first thing he saw, once he was in the room, was the anonymous letter stuck on the glass. E. J. watched him as he advanced within reading distance.

"It is true," she said after a pause.

"True?" He didn't look at her, and his speech was parrotlike.

"Yes. I am here in disguise. By my uncle's will, if I earn my living in New York for a year, I am to come into possession of a hundred thousand dollars," she continued quietly. "But I have a similar sum left me already by another uncle. If I touch that, however, during my year in New York, I lose the second legacy."

Burt broke into a harsh, unnatural laugh.

"It sounds like something of Chubby's," he said. "How—how romantic!"

"And inconvenient. Claudia received that note on the mirror by mail, and now she has dubbed me ungrateful, even mean. I suppose I am. She shall have the money she wants on Monday."

He swung round at this, facing her for the first time, but E. J. refused to look at him, waiting for his next words, which would tell her all she cared to know. What these words would be she scarcely dared to hope.

"But—if you give Claude two hundred dollars, you will lose this second legacy!" he gasped at last, as if under great stress.

"Yes."

A LITTLE silence followed. From the mirror the anonymous letter brazened its message for the world to read.

"It doesn't seem fair," Burt added presently in a low, flat voice. "You were meant to have the Randall money; at least, I'm sure you were. And Claudia is scarcely worth surrendering a fortune for. Have you thought—"

"Until my poor brain whirls!" Her heart leaped at his words. She was reminded of a wintry sun struggling through gray clouds. "Nothing, Burt, was quite as unfair as that note, unsigned," she went on, a prayer in the eyes which sought his for the first time, compelling them to seek the floor.

"That was unfair; more, it was mean and small. It has hurt me, and the hurt comes with the thought how much the writer of such a missive must detest me, to stoop to such an act. Claudia stabbed me again and again, and what the others will say—Toby—I scarcely dare to think. But that letter! Only a coward would be capable of such a thing, and a coward I cannot abide."

The color had spread from chin to brow; he dared not raise his eyes from the point of his boot.

"Why do you say this to me?" he asked when speech was possible.

"Only to let you see how I hate it, even more than Claudia's ugly accusations. It couldn't have been a man—"

"Why not?" he interrupted, frankly curious.

"Men don't stoop so low," she told him quietly.

His laugh rang out unpleasantly.

"You sure must have a fine opinion of your own sex," he said.

E. J. shook her head.

"No. I'm what Toby would call a 'bear' for women, Burt. I'm not one of those persons out of a book who look upon all others of their sex as possible rivals and walk this earth declaring I simply loathe them. Perhaps I'm old-fashioned though, for I do think we are the weaker vessel, and only the weak strike in the dark, just as a man never strikes at a woman. I am done. I never wanted the money—just the dollars and cents of it, you know; but Uncle Randall's wish seemed to crown me with knight-errantry—"

"He was a garrulous old man!"

E. J. elected to ignore this speech. Indeed, glancing quickly at her, it appeared to him as if its significance had passed her by.

"Claudia shall have her two hundred and go to Hartford; while I—I suppose this means home to me," was all she said.

"Back to Medford!" This seemed to arouse him. "Why? You will still have the original legacy—quite a comfortable bit of money, isn't it?"

"Money matters least of all with me," she told him quietly. "It is hard to make people believe that I am happier here in New York, working for my daily bread, than I ever was before in all my life. And the Randall legacy at the end of this year has nothing to do with that happiness I feel. In fact, I'd be happier without the money to consider; for then, perhaps, people would believe I am in earnest. And I am. I can make New York pay me a living wage; I've failed again and again, but I shall succeed in the end!" The color rushed to her face; her words rang crisp and distinct. "I am not beaten; I refuse to surrender. I am going to stick and win out in spite of that damnable thing!"

HER finger pointed out, a bit dramatically perhaps, the anonymous letter that Claudia had fastened to the glass; and Burt suddenly found himself between two fires, for it was impossible to turn either to the note or to the girl's impassioned face.

"I'm sure Toby will understand," he said at last a little brusquely.

"Are you?" she asked pointedly then.

He was silent, and she repeated her question, allowing no quarter, though she saw him flush and cringe.

It was the truth she was pleading for, and he hung undecided for a moment, seeking an escape from the solace of confession. E. J., watching, saw the fight he made; and when he was calmer, though she realized she had lost the good fight, no sense of failure seized her. For she was satisfied now that this boy wasn't vicious; the glimpse she caught of him in that moment revealed the fact that he was merely weak.

"My God!" he said, rising and going toward the door. "I can't even be honest with you. I believe I want to, but—I can't. Don't ask me now, E. J., for I can't bring myself to tell you what it's all about; but—stay, will you? Stay and win in spite of everything and everybody. Toby will understand; every regular person must. Go down to Eve's, as you proposed; don't let that—that damnable letter spoil your holiday. Perhaps I wont be there."

"But you must come too, Burt," she insisted firmly.

He looked at her with eyes which sought an answer to a question which scarcely was a question as yet.

"You ask me to come? You want me?"

"Yes."

He made a quick, expressive gesture with his hands; then he fled the room.

CHAPTER XV

THE golden glow of dreams attained enveloped the little house on Long Island which Eve had leased for the two months of midsummer. When she opened the door herself that Saturday afternoon, with Toby close upon her heels, she could scarcely check a little sigh of exquisite satisfaction.

"Oh," cried Toby ecstatically, "it's a dear!"

Shining faces met. There was no disguising the genuine pleasure of the moment for either of them. Eve had seen it all before, to be sure, but there were hundreds of new delights to point out to Toby, or for Toby to point out to her; they became like children displaying their gifts on Christmas morning.

"There's a lettuce bed behind the house," said Eve.

"You can scarcely do anything with it this season," Toby ventured. "But another year— Eve, if the house was only yours!"

"It must be fine to watch things growing," mused the artist with a far-away look which sat oddly on her Pierrot's face. "This is what I want, some day," she added, dropping down on the window-seat in the living-room. "I used to think I'd get lost out of earshot of the 'L' trains, and homesick at nights away from the eagle eye on the Metropolitan Tower; but this is good. Are you shocked?"

"Glory, no!" laughed Toby. "I came from the tall grass, and even now I step high in crossing Broadway, as if I expected to find brambles instead of asphalt under my feet. I guess I've got a small-town heart, which is as bad as having a thirty-six waist, in New York."

"We're all small-town product here," said Eve.

The house had originally belonged to an artist, a man who presently had grown beyond simple things; and while it was small, it was beautifully planned and as different from the usual detached miniature cottage as a Corot is from a chromo. There were only two floors, and above-stairs but two bedrooms, but each room had its own tiled bath and a sleeping porch as well. This greatly simplified the cargo of nine guests expected; the men were assigned to one side of the house, while the girls took the other.

It was a very hot morning, with the Sound like a copper caldron, when they arrived. Eve went to the station in a two-horse phaeton to meet them, but Toby remained at home and sat under the tree with "Jane Eyre," since she could find "P. and P." neither in the village nor among her own effects. She "skipped" a bit and decided *Rochester* would have been a movie actor had he lived in the present day; but she was glad to drop the book when she heard the shouts of the invading army down the road.

"The boys are walking over; there wasn't room for everybody in the carriage," said Ivy in an excited voice as she found herself at last in this wonderful house. "Eve told them to follow their noses, but since Chubby hasn't got much of a one, I only hope he doesn't play out before he arrives. What a cunning villa, Eve!"

"It isn't a villa, and it isn't cunning, Ivy Lyn!" declared Miss Masters severely. "A villa is something that stands back from a macadamized road and has a carriage 'sweep' in front; also it has a stained-glass window at the head of the stairs and 'art' lighting-fixtures throughout the first floor. This is just a house—neither cute, cunning, nor darling. . . . . Claudia, did you expect to do Shakespeare on the lawn? Why all that luggage? You see the lawn—six by eight, I think it is; but there are miles of ocean beyond, I am sure."

"Then we'll do 'Neptune's Daughter,'" decided Toby.

BURT and Chubby and the Poet and Peasant arrived a half-hour after the phaeton, and after Ivy had con-

sumed much time and eyesight playing *Sister Anne* in the middle of the road. Harvey Shepherd was coming down that afternoon, and Quintin Glynn had refused Eve's invitation to accept Cherry Bough's.

Each was assigned his duties; and E. J., who hadn't been raised by the aunts for nothing, was put in charge of the kitchen—where, when Eve remembered to order from the village, she concocted the most delicious as well as amazing things.

Although they had come down here for a vacation, a real rest, and a frolic, Eve had arranged to do a little work each day, using E. J. as her model; and while E. J. didn't realize this, it was done more for her benefit than for Eve's. E. J. hadn't said anything to Toby yet about Uncle Randall's will, for she wanted this week to pass without a cloud; and while Toby was her friend, at times her heart failed her as she pondered on what she had done.

It was the Black Sheep who was detailed to the kitchen with E. J., to watch the fire and fetch and carry wood and water. And this man who was "born to the purple," as Chubby's literary brain put it, and who enjoyed an income which made seagoing yachts and French motor-cars not only a possibility but a reality, asked nothing more than to be permitted to make himself generally useful in the same room that sheltered E. J. It wasn't until this week in July that he entirely abandoned all hope of ever winning the girl he loved, but then it wasn't until this same week that he ever gave a serious thought to Burton George, or noticed the boy and E. J. together.

Deliberately he saw Burt doing his utmost to avoid this girl whose mere presence was sufficient to change gray sky to golden dawn for him; yet he seemed ever to be hovering in her vicinity, like a moth that fears the flame but must circle round it, nearer and nearer, until it has reached its goal, the heart of fire.

At table Burt invariably sought a place next to one of the other girls, and since it was "catch-as-catch-can," to a less care-free crowd, the fact that Burt never found himself with E. J. for a partner would have evoked comment before this. It was the same in bathing, out rowing, on sprints along the beach in the moonlight. Burt could not keep away; he must be within sound of her voice, his eyes devouring her loveliness; yet to Harvey's watchful eyes it was quite evident what was going on: the boy was steeling himself against her, and was weakening. Faithful Black Sheep feared for the crisis and searched his brain for ways to help his wonder-girl.

He had liked Burton George; but then, he had liked the world which it appeared had been created for his plaything. His hands had been full until E. J. came out of the Berkshires. Now his golden apples had changed to fruit of Sodom, but he was quite aware just the same that golden apples continued to grow, if not in his orchard. He had been born with a passion for fairness which quite equaled E. J.'s, and it was this passion that made him desirous of being wholly fair with Burt. His good looks were not to be denied, and his manners were as charming as his education was appreciable, but—and Harvey hoped he was quite fair—his mouth was weak.

The Black Sheep was worried with what he saw, and what he clearly didn't understand. Once or twice he fancied that Claudia assumed a hostile air toward E. J., but then where E. J. was concerned Harvey was frankly fanciful, and Claudia most times kept her feelings to herself, so that less sharp eyes detected nothing amiss between the two girls. Claudia, in truth, was a little frightened when she remembered what she had said to E. J., for she made no mistake as to the hit this "mean and ungrateful" young person had made with the Tower.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW the Black Sheep came to suggest a production of Chubby's scenario, during their July week, was something of a mystery. Of course everyone knew of the existence of this scenario which was formerly a novel. But how Harvey came to think

of producing it, was something quite different.

"I don't see why," maintained Ivy stoutly. "Geniuses always have patrons."

"What is your husband's immortal work called, please?" asked Toby.

" 'Beyond the City,' " replied Ivy.

"It's really a corking idea, Harvey." Chubby was explaining the scenario to Shepherd, and ignoring Toby completely. "Most of the scenes can be made right here, with our own little crowd. I've assisted Macklin so often that I'm perfectly capable of directing a picture myself, especially my own picture. It was a great little idea of yours to produce 'Beyond the City' down here this week!"

"So now you're being credited with the happy thought," mused Toby.

It was useless to argue with Harvey that Chubby's work was hopeless, and that it was simply a waste of money to make the picture with a lot of inexperienced people. The Towerites were quite mad about the subject, with Claudia the most enthusiastic of them all, though it was Toby's idea that everybody should "invest" in Chubby's masterpiece.

"Why should Harvey wax fat off of all the profits?" she demanded. "It isn't fair, Black Sheep. We'll make a pool; each of us shall contribute our spinster's mite, since none of us are widows; and then some morning we'll wake up and find ourselves wealthy—isn't that the idea, Chubby? Wealth means breakfasts in bed and velvet hats in July and straw ones in January, Claudia. Wealth means grapefruit and chops instead of Coleridge and Wordsworth for breakfast, Andy Stewart. Wealth means no more 'Nothing today' from cynical youths wedded to racing charts, E. J. So bring your pennies, and we'll form the Tower Producing Company on the spot."

The idea was received with applause, and unsuspected greenbacks were produced from unknown hiding-places with which to purchase "stock." Harvey was appointed treasurer, for that was a much more responsible trust than president, according to Claudia, and Harvey had more than his word to give as bond. E. J. handed in ten dollars which Eve had just paid her; at least she still had a return ticket to New York, she reflected as she saw her earnings whisked away and found herself with a slip of paper disfigured with hieroglyphics from Toby Lonsdell's pen.

HARVEY and Chubby ran up to town to rent a camera and purchase outright such supplies as couldn't be begged, borrowed or leased, while the "company" gathered under the tree to hear Toby read aloud the scenario to them. Actual work was to begin tomorrow, and Chubby had expressed a wish that everybody familiarize himself with his part to-day.

"I think it is very strong," ventured Ivy, turning to E. J., when Miss Lonsdell paused after the first reel. "You're *Nellie;* isn't it a dandy part? Chubby says it's a Mary Pickford part; you're harassed until the very last ten feet, and then you marry *Arthur*—that's Burt. And *Vernon* and *Carlotta*—that's Harvey and Claudia—go over a cliff in an automobile to their death."

"So it matters little whether you swim or not," threw in Toby, turning again to the manuscript. "You have wasted two whole days, Claude."

They spent most of the next morning looking for locations, but eventually the "old home" was found and secured for photographic purposes from a rustic who seemed thoroughly familiar with the motion-picture industry, judging from his charges. Fortunately there was no "old mill" called for in the scene-plot and the ocean was free, as Toby pointed out; but other than that it cost money to stir an inch down in the village, once it was known they were "movie actors." A dozen infants were offered to Chubby; it seemed incredible that they were about to make a picture that didn't call for a baby. And since it was July, the daisy-chain which *Nellie* made had to be changed to a more seasonable occupation. She was "discovered" caressing a small cat, the said cat's owner collecting fifty cents for the animal's services.

Chubby directed the picture, but there was a camera-man down from New York, more in the interest of the rented camera than of the picture, Miss

Lonsdell thought. Luckily the weather was "with them;" California couldn't have turned out better sunshine, Chubby thought. All the exterior scenes were to be taken at once; for the interiors they would journey to a studio at New Rochelle which could be secured by "private parties."

ALTHOUGH this week was popularly supposed to represent a holiday, it is quite certain that none of them ever worked so hard before in their lives. Chubby had them up at daybreak, and after hours before the camera in the hot sun, he rehearsed them in the evening, at home. They lived *à la buffet,* too, according to Toby, for it was more than mere human flesh could stand to prepare a meal after playing the persecuted heroine all day. E. J. had to give it up, without Harvey's insistence.

Yet they all enjoyed it in spite of hard work and insufficient meals, for Adam's flesh seems heir to "make-believe" as well as less agreeable things called to our attention by the Good Book. Harvey remembered he had "acted" at college, and even though he was cast for the villain, it is beyond cavil that he never moved an inch before the camera's eye without "acting" to the best of his ability. He would have delighted Sardou, Toby thought, pleasantly overlooking the fact that she too "emoted" all over the place in the character of the heroine's mamma. Chubby, as director, was forever imploring them to "ginger up the action;" and taking their cue from him, the entire company went at it hammer and tongs until one was reminded of the American coon-shouter who failed to impress London because she sang so strenuously that she finished in a "frenzy of perspiration, and no gentleman likes to see a lady sweat."

There was scarcely time for alien thoughts to simmer through the brain these days, but the Black Sheep managed to keep an eye on E. J. and Burt—watching not as a spy but as a friend. For he desired nothing greater than this girl's happiness; and though clearly she didn't love him, she must love some one, and there was a possibility of this some one's being young George. Again Harvey saw this boy seemingly fight against the sweetness which was E. J.'s, and again he marveled, finding his only solution to his conduct in the memory of the barrier which had separated Claudia and Quin. It must be money. Perhaps he could remedy the evil.

He was thinking of this one late afternoon when they were coming back from a location, eight of them piled in his comfortable motor-car, still in costume and make-up, since there was more hot water to be had at home than at the farmhouse or in the village. He had removed his black mustaches before he took charge of the car, but in every other respect he was the villainous *Vernon* of "Beyond the City," and E. J., instead of sitting quietly beside him, should have been imploring *Arthur* to "save her from his clutches." Parenthetically, Burt and Chubby were quarreling over a scene together, egged on by a mildly interested Toby.

"By all means tie E. J. to the rocks and let Burt rescue her," she told the diminutive director. "Also, if you can get some cakes of ice, we might show her crossing the river, pursued by bloodhounds. But no! If they ask fifty cents for a kitten, the good Lord only knows what they'll demand for a dog. We'll change it to frightened by mice, perhaps."

At that moment they arrived at the house, which the artist had built facing the Sound so that the back garden presented itself to the road down which they had come. E. J. was the first out of the car, and without stopping for the rest, she picked up her *Nellie* skirts and ran nimbly around the house to the front door. There was a man on the porch. He had heard the motor stop and came forward to meet E. J.

"You see, it is impossible to hide from me," said David Holmes.

CHAPTER XVII

TO E. J. it seemed incredible that this should be David standing there in the red glow of the sun, David who was serious even when he smiled, as now.

"You see, it is impossible to lose me," he said again, and then E. J. felt his hand grasp hers; but their lips didn't meet.

He was in gray, and her first thought was that he looked very cool and clean; but this, she quickly realized was because her companions looked so higgledy-piggledy in their paint and costumes. They were at her heels, already, and there was no time for thought, for plans, as she introduced the man from home—Toby, somehow, coming last.

There was much about this corner of the world that David never understood, partly perhaps for the reason he never tried very hard to penetrate its motley; but he was the sort of man that other men respect and women know subconsciously is their champion; and the Tower, if it never took him to its bosom, at least can be said to have extended the hand of fellowship to him.

E. J. had taken her "company" into the kitchen, and there David sat on the window-sill while the girl superintended a cold supper which Chubby and Andrew Stewart were principally responsible for. Tomatoes, blackberries and cucumbers had been bought from the farmer at the "old home" at simply Waldorf prices, as Miss Lonsdell informed them without inquiry, and the sliced ham and potted chicken had been picked up at the general store in the village; there was also lemonade, plenty of it and well iced. They had dined off less at home in the Tower many a time, and the beauty of such meals was that everybody "jumped in" and did his share, taking the entire burden off of E. J.

"The darling girl is our leading lady, and that is sufficient honor for any one lone female," Toby declared. "You couldn't expect the Divine Sarah to come home from 'Jeanne Dorée' and jump in and make a salad, tripping from the Marseillaise to a mayonnaise—or Nazimova to quit Ibsen and lend her genius to a cheese omelet."

Although David was a trifle uncertain regarding who was his hostess, he had been prevailed upon to stop for supper, but he had firmly refused Miss Lonsdell's invitation to remain overnight and go back to New York in the morning. He had work to do in New York; he had only come down for a few days, he said. At the Tower, Charon had given him their address on Long Island, and he had run down to see E. J. because he knew the aunts would be anxious to hear all the news. In the afternoon he had arranged for a vehicle to come fetch him in time to catch his train, that night.

"Ah, you are like Providence and leave nothing to chance," murmured Toby; but behind the flippant words there was a wealth of admiration. David Holmes was as plain as a log cabin, and like a log cabin he was substantial, with a solidity unknown to the suburban villa of stucco and shingles.

THEY went out in the garden after supper, most of them stopping in the vicinity of the porch, for they had had a hard day. E. J. rather resented this "wholesale desertion," as she termed it, for she and David, starting toward the beach, suddenly found themselves alone. But there was no escaping a tête-à-tête now; the others had purposely stopped behind; she could hear the wail of Ivy's fiddle and the tired laughter of the men float down to them by the sea.

It was strange that these two people, this man and this girl, who had known each other all their lives, should feel the awkwardness of this moment. They had nothing to say to each other, and each felt shy and ill at ease.

At last E. J. seized in desperation upon Toby, as some people seize upon the weather for a topic of conversation.

"Isn't she a dear!" she enthused.

"She's very clever, certainly," David replied. "Ever since you told us who Uncle Toby was I have been reading her column in *The Berkshire Star*. I'd like to get hold of 'Questions and Answers' for my paper, but I suppose *The Star* has the exclusive rights in that territory to her stuff. You know, I am in New York to see about a printing press."

"Then the paper is a certainty?" asked E. J.

"I think so."

"But my year isn't up until the first

of March," she hazarded after a brief pause. "Then I failed you, too; I didn't learn the newspaper game as I had planned. I'm sorry, David, but it was quite clear that the business was not for me. Toby would have helped me if she had thought me capable of worth-while things, but it seems I'm not. I doubt very much if I could do the sort of thing that Toby does—the 'Questions and Answers,' you know. There's a heap of work attached to it, even with Toby's system. Often she's dead tired when she comes home from the office."

A moment or two slipped by before David answered this.

"I never planned to work my wife to death," he said finally. "Of course, I'd want her to help, for this paper was to be a thing of pleasure as well as profit, and we would both watch it grow. I can't play at art, like these fellows in New York."

"No, we can't all be alike," she agreed quickly. "Only—they don't 'play' at art, David. Their brushes and pens and violins are as real to them as your printing press is to you, albeit a trifle more ethereal; of course Ivy's fiddle doesn't come under this head." She stopped to smile at him, but the light touch escaped him entirely, and she shrank as from a slap in the face. "I—I want to help you," she added hastily, lamely.

"I would want you to—spiritually at least," he said.

THIS was rather better, although—wooden, heavy. It seemed that their conversation together was both wooden and heavy, lacking entirely that inspiration and sympathy which is second nature to hearts in tune.

"I was never counting on your—your inheritance for my newspaper," he said, after another long silence. There was a slight embarrassment in his voice, and E. J. hastened to put things right.

"Dear David, I never meant that for a minute! I know you too well to think such things. When I said my year wasn't up until March, I meant that I could not be in Medford to help you from the start unless I decided to surrender all claim to the money. Perhaps that would be better, after all," she added, with a little sigh.

He looked at her quickly, shaking his head.

"You mustn't think of taking such a step on my account," he insisted. "It would be selfish of me to wish it. Besides, you have your friends here to consider, I suppose; they have been kind to you; you like this life—"

What neither of them seemed to realize at that moment was that life is a matter of two persons only, and not of environment. Mary Stuart was unhappy on a throne; Abélard and Héloïse knew contentment in exile.

Fortunately Toby rescued them at that moment from each other, and bore David back to the house, where the trap from the village had arrived to take him over to meet his train. It was a tired-looking lot on the porch that waited to say good-by to their guest, and in the confusion of departure E. J. didn't realize that any voice was lacking.

David got into the vehicle, and the driver looked down to say:

"Any of you want to drive over with him? I have to come right back this way."

His voice as well as his speech implied that he was certain of his invitation being accepted, for he was a romantic old person with an eye for a pretty girl. Any man coming all this distance just to spend a few hours surely came for one purpose only, and that purpose was a sweetheart. For his part, he was willing to give the lovers an extra half-hour together, especially since he had to come back this way.

E. J. only hesitated a moment. Then she said "Thank you" and sprang in beside David before Harvey or Andrew Stewart could offer their assistance. Disapproval was written large on the Black Sheep's face as he followed Toby into the house. In only a slightly less degree, both David and E. J. disapproved of the romantic liveryman's interference.

CHAPTER XVIII

BEFORE they reached the village signs of the coming storm were visible in the west. The day had been one of sultry hotness, and the sun

had gone down like a ripe orange, evening bringing little relief from the oppressive heat.

"Storm coming from town; I like the other kind better myself," said their driver as he whipped up the old white horse. The rattle of the wheels forbade conversation, and when they reached the station there was little time for farewells, and for this E. J. was humbly thankful. Their drive together had been a farce, played for the benefit of others, and both man and girl would have preferred their own thoughts for company just then.

"I'm afraid you're in for a wetting if the old man doesn't hurry back," David said as they stood on the station platform.

The air was sulphurous; the shriek of the locomotive up the rails came with the startling wail of a night-bird in a dark wood. David threw away his cigar and looked at E. J. with a sort of hesitancy in his glance, but she only threw back her head and smiled.

"You know," she reminded him. "neither storms nor mice ever disturbed me in the slightest degree. Mr. Tooker will drive back quickly, because he wants to get home himself. I shall be quite all right, thanks."

His relief was reflected in his face. Something there, too, moved E. J. to say, with an impulse that was foreign to the aunts' training:

"You know I never did bother two straws about storms in Medford. Do you find me changed now, in New York?"

He didn't answer at once, and when he did speak again the train was in sight gliding down the rails with its long line of lighted coaches, and men and women were pushing forward to the gates.

"I suppose you find me changed," he said, ignoring her question except in this that it had swayed his thoughts. "I see myself that I am something in the nature of a fifth wheel to a wagon in the barn that shelters such men as Stewart and Lyn and Shepherd; he's the one they called Black Sheep, I think?"

There was one man he had failed to mention.

"The Black Sheep? Oh, yes! That is Harvey Shepherd." The train had almost come to a stop; she was jostled by the crowd, intent on getting out of the coming storm.

Still David hesitated.

"Why the nickname?" he asked at length.

"Oh, my dear!" E. J. wanted to laugh. Was it possible that David was jealous of Harvey? She herself knew how silly such a jealousy was. "He is one of the Westchester Shepherds," she found herself explaining elaborately. "His sister is no end of a toff, for they have both money and family; only Harvey, instead of playing the society dandy, prefers to put in his time in Bohemia, painting a little, writing a little, composing a bit of song or verse. The Black Sheep is his designation, because he has strayed from his fold—which is Fifth Avenue, not Sixth, you know."

THERE was not another moment to spare. He swung aboard the steps of the last coach, waving his good-by from that perilous position. E. J., hurrying back to the waiting trap, wondered if it had occurred to him that their whole time together had been formal to the point of dreariness, and far from being loverlike, they had bored each other as mere friends could never do. She came up to old Tooker and gave him her hand as she sprang lightly into the red-and-yellow trap.

"We're in for that storm any minute now," said the old man, pointing with his whip to the mountains of heavy-looking clouds which approached as if on wings. "Want to stop in the depot?"

"Oh, no! Let's go on, please, if you don't mind. We may be able to get home, you know, and even if we don't, I'm not afraid of a wetting," she added, with a smile.

The old man grinned with pleased surprise, and the white horse set off down the road. The storm broke before they had gone, its fury heralded by a veritable Sahara of flying dust and leaves and bits of paper. Tooker dodged and muttered "Gosh!"—which was Toby's stand-by and made E. J. want to laugh.

Her dress was of some white, summery stuff, and while she had brought

a silk sweater of Eve's, she wore no hat. Their vehicle afforded no shelter, but then even the shelter of a curtained carriage would have been of no avail against this storm. She found herself hoping that Eve's sweater wouldn't run—such a possibility spelling disaster both to the garment and to her white clothes.

Suddenly, without warning, the sky seemed to open and drop upon the earth a great live coal; and with it came a giant oak, crashing and groaning into the roadway not fifty yards from the horse's nose. For a second which seemed an eternity the air was full of gases that turned the girl a little sick, and that, combined with the shock, made her unaware of the accident that had befallen them. Even the tilt forward was unnoticed, and Mr. Tooker's mild, quaint oaths passed lightly over her head.

"What is it?" she asked, standing up, and one hand was raised to sweep the cobwebs from her brain.

The white horse, stunned, had gone down on his head in the road, and the old man was already at his rein; clearly E. J. saw this now; but there, by the wheels of the bravely painted trap, was another man, a man with white face and dripping garments, mumbling her name.

FOR a moment fear gripped her, and she lost her head. The smell of sulphur was very strong; the earth still trembled; and there in the roadway lay the tree like a writhing soul in distress.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" she cried wildly, turning to spring out from the other side of the carriage. Rain beat in her face; wind cooled her brow, and somewhat revived her.

"E. J.! Thank God, I have found you!" said the man, and then she recognized the voice.

"Burt, you frightened me—you and the lightning. Is the horse dead, poor fellow? It is my fault; I told Mr. Tooker to drive home without waiting for the storm to pass."

She was by far the calmer of the two. With superhuman strength he caught her by the arms and swung her clear of the mud-guard into the road, where, though both of them were unconscious of the fact, she leaned against his heaving bosom, clasped with trembling embrace. She now saw that he was without jacket, wearing only the short-sleeved, low-collared shirt that the boys had adopted since coming down on Long Island; he was hatless, too; his thick hair lay wet and matted on his forehead. Mud splashed his trousers to the knee; his white buck shoes were ruined beyond repair.

"There, Burt! I'm quite all right," she murmured, after a moment.

The hands trembled as they freed her. E. J. chose to ignore his distress and left him to run to Tooker's aid. There was little about a horse she didn't know, and pity stirred her now as she beheld the struggling animal between the shafts of the trap. Although he recognized his master's voice, since Tooker's muttered words quieted him periodically, the old man couldn't free him from the lines and keep him down in the shafts at the same time. The girl saw this at once.

"Put your knee on his head; I'll unharness him, Mr. Tooker," she cried. The old man was past surprise by this time, and he obeyed her mutely, scarcely knowing what he did. It was only when his horse was free, and between them they had brought him to his feet again, that he found his speech.

"Gosh!" he ejaculated, and then stood quietly by while E. J. harnessed up again.

BURT came forth to claim her now, a little surer of himself, but visibly affected by what he had gone through since they had told him at the house that E. J. had gone to the village in Silas Tooker's trap.

"Thank God, I found you!" he repeated.

With his horse up and apparently as good as ever, Mr. Tooker's thoughts turned again toward home. The fallen tree across the roadway made a detour of the village necessary, but he was almost cheerful about it as he invited E. J. and Burt to "jump in."

As is often the case, with that one momentous crash the fury of the storm had somewhat abated, and the lifting of the clouds, together with the scent of growing green things, foretold the end.

Neither girl nor man could get any wetter than they were, and the way through the village was longer in minutes and seconds by the carriage than was the straight road before them on foot. Burt whispered something in E. J.'s ear, and she turned at once to the old man, speaking in her frank, free voice.

"Thank you, but we think it will be nearer to run home through the lane," she said. "We can easily beat you, you know. And I'd like to get out of my wet clothes at the earliest possible minute—instead of sitting still in them in your trap, you know. I'm so sorry Dick got a tumble."

Tooker had recognized Burt as one of "them play-actors," and while he stroked his chin thoughtfully as he remembered David, there was nothing else for him to do but to accept E. J.'s decree as royal, and drive off in the night alone.

CHAPTER XIX

FOR a little while E. J. and Burt tramped along in silence, heads down as they breasted the cool, fine rain. The storm had passed on out to sea, and the rumble of distant thunder echoed fainter and fainter across the dripping cornfields.

"You shouldn't have ventured out to-night; they ought to have known better," Burt said suddenly, speaking for the first time.

"I drove to the station with Mr. Holmes," E. J. returned.

"So I thought." He seemed to hesitate a moment; then: "Has he gone?"

"Not home—to New York on business for a few days. We'll see him again, I suppose, when we return to town Sunday night. You didn't say good-by, did you?" She knew now that his voice had been missing when their cries of farewell had followed the trap into the lane.

"I saw him go; I didn't wait; I went out." In the darkness she couldn't see his face, but his accent was bitter. There was a brief silence as they stumbled on through the wet leaves and mud. "They said you are going to marry that fellow—it can't be true, E. J.!" he burst out then passionately.

"I have known David Holmes pretty much all my life," she said, her eyes raised to his. "We have been engaged to marry for years. Why can't it be true, Burt?"

Again his words came with a rush.

"He doesn't love you—"

"You can't say that; you do not know David."

"You don't love him!"

"You mustn't say such things."

"I know they are true! Can't I see? My God, when I'm mad about you myself, girl!"

SOMETHING leaped in her breast; for the first time she detected signs of thaw, and felt that the ice was really going at last.

"I love you, I love you! That's all there is to it," he continued, his dark eyes eager, his lips scarcely under control. "I tried to fight it; I told myself I ought to hate you—I reminded myself of Alice. Yet in the end it was always the same: nothing mattered or counted but you. When that man came to-night and they told me who he was, I couldn't content myself in the same room. I had to get up and go out—walk, walk. I had almost convinced myself that I didn't care, that you were my—my enemy; and then I got home and they said you hadn't returned. I knew then; stumbling through the storm I knew I loved you, just you—in spite of myself, in spite of everything and everybody. And—I'm not fit to live; I'm—a wretch!"

His hands went up to his face, and his voice sank to a low moan, but E. J. heard it all, every word, and while she ached for his wounds, self-inflicted, she was glad.

"My poor Burt!" she said gently.

"Don't! You don't know!" he cried, cringing under the touch of her hand. "I—I am Lewis Randall."

There was a moment of breathless silence before she said, quietly and yet with a suggestion of encouragement: "Yes?"

"You don't understand," he continued. "I am the man—I'm the son of the George Randall's cousin who was

to inherit the Randall money in case you failed. Do you see it now? I was at college when George Randall died, and since he had provided for me ever since I was left an orphan at five or so, I thought, more or less naturally, that he would leave me his little fortune at his death. I had never heard of you until the will was read. And then I found he had squeezed his estate dry, collected all his moneys in one lump and provided the hundred thousand dollars which was to go to you—to offset a similar legacy left you by an uncle on your father's side."

How vividly she remembered! Uncle Standish's will had bequeathed her his money because "no one with Southern blood in his veins could ever be depended on to earn his own living," and then Uncle Randall died,—with his tongue in his cheek, she was sure,—and his will gave his grand-niece a similar sum provided she "went to New York and alone and unaided for one year supported herself by her own labor and without assistance—" She had thought it rather a pretty idea then; but now she saw them as two silly old men, one filled with deep-rooted prejudices, the other saturated with family pride, who had worked havoc and wrought deceit by their childish game.

WHEN E. J. spoke again, her voice was far from steady. All unknowingly she had been made the idol for whom others had been sacrificed. It hurt her to think of it all.

"He left you nothing?" she asked.

"His affectionate regard, and the money in case you didn't fulfill his wishes—just that."

"Oh, it was unfair!"

"The money was his. I was too cocksure." He smiled crookedly.

"But after he had raised you from a child! Certainly you were nearer to him than I was, for Uncle Randall hadn't seen me in years. It was just that he wanted to—to best Uncle Standish."

"I guess they're still waiting for the result, across the Styx."

"You were obliged to leave college?" How thoughtless of others she had been!

"Yes, I had to leave college," he said; "it was my last year. I suppose I might have found a way to jog along, but—I was all broken up. You see, everybody took it for granted that I would be George Randall's heir; and there was a girl—Alice. We were to be married; and when I came into my inheritance, I was to be taken in partnership with her brother, a successful lawyer in Boston. Of course, E. J. Adams sent all our plans higher than a kite. It was made pretty plain to me that an alliance with the Winship heiress wasn't at all desirable if I came empty-handed. And I was wild, or thought I was, about Alice then."

He stopped, and E. J. found time to echo the sentiment that had flashed through her brain while she listened to him.

"What a wretched business it has been, Burt!" She must still call him Burt, she divined.

"You haven't heard the worst," he said with a certain grimness. "When I realized that without the Randall fortune Alice Winship was lost to me, I recalled the facts of the will, and saw that the money wasn't—wasn't E. J. Adams' yet. You—she would have to spend a year in New York, earning her living. So I came to New York to look for her."

HE paused for a second, just glancing at her face; but the girl said nothing, and after a moment he continued:

"Of course I had my way to make in New York, and not an idea as to how to go about it. I—I was not quite my normal self those days, I think. I failed until I was sick. One day I heard at my boarding house that they needed extra people up at the Aurora. I went, and stood in line for an hour before I saw Macklin. Then he picked me out, said I was a type. It was odd that I should land there, with Chubby, who knew you."

"Strange indeed!" she echoed.

"I was disgusted with everything, with life, with people, with myself most of all! Then you came out to the studio. How I hated you when I realized who you were! I determined then and there that you shouldn't make good—you'd

never stay through that year in New York if I could help it. See what a thing I had become!"

"But at that time E. J. Adams was only a name to you," she told him gently.

"Afterward she became more than a name, and still I—" He stopped again, struggling for composure. "I deliberately 'queered' you with Macklin," he said at last. "You had only a small part, and all your scenes were with me, while I had dozens of scenes by myself, or with other players. When you and I occupied the stage, I sacrificed myself to mar you, forcing you into awkward poses and bad business, because I knew that later, alone, I would have a chance to redeem myself, while you'd have none. People, seeing the defects in the picture when you and I played together, yet no defects when I played alone or with others, naturally blamed you. Macklin did. And for fear that wasn't sufficient, I went to him and said—said you killed my opportunities by your bad acting. So you were not reëngaged for the next feature. Oh, I was low, low!"

"Never mind!" Her heart bled for him. "Don't say any more about it, Burt. Now that you have told me, and are penitent, nothing else matters."

He shook his head, staring down at the wet leaves under his feet.

"YOU don't know half, and I've got to tell you all. I have followed you like a Nemesis ever since that day, even though I had commenced to love you. For I fought that back; I reminded myself of Alice and the Randall inheritance. Alice Winship!" He laughed. "I couldn't tell you at this minute whether her eyes are blue or black, whether she is short or tall, ugly as sin or as beautiful as you! For it's all you, now; you fill my world or empty it."

"Oh, Burt, this is hard for both of us!" she murmured.

"You must remember the Derringer tip Eve gave you? And you told me about it, at lunch in a little French coffee-shop over on Thirty-ninth Street. Again I showed my ugly soul. The moment you had left me, to go first to some picture studio, I telephoned to Claudia Rey, told her I was Tom Huntley, a name I had heard her mention, and hurried her to Derringer. She got the job."

"Yes." E. J. recalled the tragic moment when Leo Derringer had told her the position was filled, and the equally tragic moment when she had discovered by whom. "Did Claudia know?"

"No, no! I'm sure she never guessed," he replied quickly. "It was two years since she had seen the man, and I disguised my voice. Besides, Claudia is not imaginative."

"No—only wild at the idea of having landed the engagement."

"And equally wild at not being able to hold up her friends to the tune of two hundred dollars. So—not to help her, but to hinder you—I wrote that anonymous note, my worst ugliness! We were at Watch Hill, and Ivy had written to Chubby about Claudia's lack of funds. He repeated it to me. Something had gone wrong that day; I was feeling especially blue—how like me to try to find excuses for myself! Anyway, I sat down and wrote that damnable letter. That is all. When you found me in the corridor and carried me back with you to the living-room where those typed words were stuck into the mirror, I—I nearly up and confessed everything."

"I know." How well she remembered his struggle!

"Then I hardened my heart toward you. I said to myself: 'In spite of her brave words, it is the money she wants, caring little how she gets it, and yet she has sufficient already.' I didn't believe that, even then, E. J."

"No, Burt, I think you didn't," she ventured with a little shake of her head.

"You will never understand my position at that moment," he continued. "I was on fire for you. I loved you, and I hated you—yes, I did—together. Because you had made me love you, against my will, I took a sort of fiendish delight in hurting you. Far from being a regular chap, I went around like a fellow in a novel, nursing a fancied grievance and snapping like a nasty little dog that needs a whip. I ran away, that day, from you, from your influence, because

I knew if I had remained another minute I should have made a clean breast of the whole business."

THERE was a little silence, and then she took him by the arms, peering up in his face with her lovely childlike eyes. They were grave; yet they were glad too, and the significance of them came like a ray of hope to the man.

"Thank God, you have told me the truth at last, Burt," she said. "That is what I wanted—the truth, of your own accord. I saw you wavering that day, and I might have turned the battle in my favor; yet I preferred to let you go—you must come to me without coërcion. And you have come, you have come! I could shout. Oh, Burt, you are weak, but not vicious; you are wrong; yet you see it. I have waited for this hour, prayed for it even, and now you have told me all. That is what I wanted, for—I guessed."

"You guessed?"

"Almost from the first. The seed was planted that first day in the studio, when you said so bitterly that *George* was a name you especially detested. I am not suspicious by nature, I hope; but it set me thinking; and your conduct, afterwards! You gave yourself away the night we saw 'Hearts in Gray,' for instance. And then, the letter. I knew it could be only—Lewis Randall."

Words tumbled incoherently from his lips. Much of what he said she never knew; yet it was a prayer for forgiveness—of that she was certain.

"I am unworthy," he cried, hiding his face in his hands. "But if some day—Girl, I adore you! I can't give you up. Let me go away, for a year."

She saw his point and nodded her assent. For his own sake he must come to her sane and whole, and this weakness which was his besetting sin could be exterminated best away from all familiar scenes and faces. She loved him well enough to take him as he was, for better, for worse, but this would not work for Burt's good, she felt, and—it was he that counted.

"Yes, go," she said, and kissed him lightly on the brow. "And oh, Burt, remember you've got to make good; it's up to you to win."

"For your sake!" he cried, catching some of her enthusiasm. "And when I come back, you'll find another fellow, a man with grit, and not a whining boy who makes his living looking pretty before a camera. And then we'll love each other like regular people, wont we? I do love you, E. J. All that is best in me belongs to you, my dear. Yet how can you forgive me!"

She placed the tips of her fingers over his mouth, smiling her old, adorable crooked smile.

"And if I can't help forgiving you?" was all she said.

CHAPTER XX

A TELEGRAM from Macklin sent Burt and Chubby (the latter carrying his finished masterpiece with him) flying up to town the next morning before E. J. was awake; and Toby, when Burt presented himself at the bedroom door, refused to arouse the girl even for a lover's farewell.

At noon E. J., sitting on the side of the bed, read the bit of folded paper which Burt had left and which Toby brought her with a pleased sort of satisfaction. Things were righting themselves in true story-book fashion—she had almost forgotten David. She read:

> Macklin has just phoned for Chubby and me to beat it up to town. Since to-day he will hear my swan-song,—Mack, not Chubby, of course,—I am hurrying Bronxward without delay. That Toby Lonsdell says you are not to be disturbed, plague take her! Still, I have the memory of your words last night, and while I'm half afraid I have no definite plans, I am setting out with one resolve fixed firmly in my mind: I'm going in to win. And then I'll come back to you. God bless you, dear girl!
>
> But Napoleon Chubbypart is yelling his head off. I must join him or suffer consequences, in this case failure to catch our train, and thus set out on the first lap of journey. It is going to be terribly hard to quietly listen to shop to-day. BURT.

E. J. read this note aloud to Toby, for there was something she wanted particularly to say to Miss Lonsdell, and this seemed a very good opening. Miss Lonsdell, however, to prove her superior clay, only snorted.

"What's it all about?" she demanded. "Far be it from me to confess to curiosity at my time of life, but—I pause for reply."

"And I hasten to make it—though it's a long story," E. J. confessed, with the ghost of a smile.

"Maybe I can escape preparing lunch then," said Toby hopefully, glancing at the watch on her wrist.

It was difficult to say all that had to be said, even to say it to such a corking pal as Toby, but E. J. was sure of her duty, and Toby listened to a straightforward tale, quite stripped of embellishment.

"The ugliest figure through it all is that I have lived here among you, accepting your hospitality and your love, and yet kept silent," she added at the very last.

Toby, too, was a hard task-master, both with herself and with others; but carefully digesting E. J.'s story, she caught her point of view. Upon impulse she asked, a bit wistfully:

"Do you really love Burt, my dear?"

"Too much to marry him to-morrow, as my heart prompts me to do," E. J. replied with her beautiful frankness. "Burt is weak, and as time goes on, he will either grow weaker or stronger. I don't believe in the idea of marrying a man to reform him; and what Burt needs is not reforming. His salvation he must work out alone, with only the knowledge that I care to spur him on, or he is not worth saving. Perhaps you think I am hard? I think I am not; I hope I am not. I want to subordinate myself entirely to the man I love, but—he must be a man."

"Yours is the stronger nature," said Toby, serious.

"I have faith in Burt. The Randall will came in the nature of a shock, and gave him a bad knock on the head. Oh, I can find a hundred excuses for him when only one is needed to explain the situation: I love him."

There was that childlike simplicity about her which seemed so characteristic. Watching her, Toby was thrilled by the romance of it all, and then suddenly she smiled—at romance, though not at E. J., refusing absolutely to elucidate.

"Claude wants a good talking to," she said instead. "Claude's a jellyfish, you know, and it is their nature to sting without reason—"

"She had reason, perhaps; at least she thought so," E. J. interposed. "Still, I know. She is not vicious, only weak. I have forgiven her everything, though she has not asked my forgiveness. I am fond of Claudia."

"We are all fond of Claudia, and she is far from being at peace with herself and the world, these days. She cares for Quin most awfully, I'm sure. Don't bother. She is heartily ashamed of herself now, and is eager to make up with you. The other night, in bed, when she thought we were all asleep, she burst into tears. When I asked her what was the matter, she replied 'Cucumbers!' But I know better; cucumbers make you howl, not weep. I guess it was you."

"Poor kid! I shall go to her at once," cried E. J., tumbling off the bed.

"Not so fast. Give her time to prepare lunch," insisted Miss Lonsdell. "It is a wonderful world! And wonders never cease, it appears; Claude and Ivy are actually getting lunch."

Miss Lonsdell took herself off to the kitchen—at least, she said she was off to the kitchen; but before E. J. had time to turn around, the irrepressible Toby's head appeared in the doorway.

"And David?" she asked.

"And David—what?" demanded E. J.

"Oh, Lord, nothing at all! I think we should confine our conversation to the weather." The door slammed.

CHAPTER XXI

"I'M a beast!" said Claudia.

Toby had declared that Miss Rey was never so happy as when calling herself unpleasant names, and while today there were tears in her eyes and her voice took on the minor note of a violin, it must be admitted that she looked more like the cover of a fashion journal than any beast the Tower could recall. She and E. J. had been "having it out," and now were in the last delicious stages of making up.

"Do forgive me," Claudia continued, grasping E. J.'s hands. "I was sorry

the moment I had said those nasty things to you, and never for a minute did I mean them, but—I was miserable, miserable!" She pecked at E. J.'s cheek and then shook herself like a spaniel coming out of the water. "And now we're buddies again," she announced sweetly. "I can go to Hartford in peace."

"Can you?" demanded Miss Lonsdell. "Then you have greater confidence in that railroad than I have, my dear."

They were back in New York—all but Eve, who remained on in her little house, entertaining other friends, and winding up each week with a huge jollification in which the Tower played a conspicuous part. David Holmes, still in New York, was due for the next week-end, but Claudia would miss it, since she was leaving at once for Hartford, with a wardrobe which if not elaborate was, as Toby pointed out, at least varied.

On Wednesday, after enough preparation for a tour of the globe, Claudia shook the dust of New York from her carefully polished shoes and set out for the Connecticut capital, her last words embracing prayers for telegrams on the opening night.

"And pay the charges, of course," she warned them. "Send 'em collect, and you might as well keep your good wishes and congratulations in the dictionary."

"But how do you know we shall send good wishes and congratulations?" demanded Miss Lonsdell. "I had planned to send purple and white immortelles in the shape of a broken lute, to Morris Derringer—"

"I haven't the faintest idea what a broken lute may be," returned Claudia, with what she believed to be fine scorn; "and it's Leo, not Morris, who will have charge in Hartford."

A FEW evenings later a hurried telephone call sent Toby flying across town to a jobbing studio where odds and ends of work were done for the little fellows and for amateurs. Chubby, looking more like a much harassed schoolboy than his favorite Napoleon, met her at the door of the plant.

"It's the picture; do you want to see it run off?" he whispered. "I saw a part myself, and then I decided I had better—better send for you."

"Chubby, I'm no heart-stimulant," said Miss Lonsdell as she followed him up to the projection-room, with a little sigh she couldn't keep in.

There was no invited audience, and for this she felt devoutly thankful. A bad "still" is often like a slap in the face, but a gentle, ladylike slap beside the agony of watching a bad film run through for the first time and having it brought home that this is you, irrevocably you. Blame it on bad directorship, insufficient lighting, a cheap cameraman, poor 'script, untried actors—place the blame where you will, and the awful result is still there, all over the thing, like the unnatural egg in Lewis Carroll's cake. Never before in her days, perhaps, was Toby's sense of humor so sorely tested. She had laughed at Chubby's story, and guyed the making of it; yet somehow or other she had felt all along that the outcome would be everything that was desired. She had let Harvey sink his money in it, and urged E. J. and Claude and Eve to buy stock. To buy stock in this hooligan!

"Oh, Chubby, surely cameras, like figures, sometimes lie!" she groaned. "Do look at Harvey. And my make-up as *The Stepmother* ought to be confiscated by the Board of Health. What a flock of sad birds we are, to be sure!"

"It can't be us!" said Chubby with a hissing sound like escaping steam.

"Ah, but it is! I recognize Claudia's evening gown that we fashioned out of the couch-cover—'Dresses may have a Turkish touch this year.' She saw that in a style-book, and I quoted it in my column only to-day, but if that is the result, good-by, job! Chubby, it's deadly!"

"The limit. If it wasn't so serious for us, I could laugh."

"It's funny, just the same. Did you get that subtitle? Surely it didn't sound the way it looks, on the screen! *'That night. Grandpa watches through the storm for the return of Nellie.'* The choir will now sing page umpty-umpty, 'Brighten the Corner Where You Are.' It seems incredible that *Nellie* can be our E. J.!"

"Toby, I don't understand—hang it all!" spat out a ruffled Chubby. "We played this in deadly earnest, but it's like a joke. You know it is!"

"Ah, you've put your finger on the spot, youngster." Miss Lonsdell brightened. "We played it all in such deadly earnestness! *Farceurs,* Chubby, get their best results with serious points. Farce must be played with a straight face, and it is only the serious thing that we may laugh over. We were all so ghastly in earnest about this thing, so conscientious! 'Beyond the City' is so downright bad that it becomes really funny."

"There's a few retakes yet, you know."

"Not a one! The scene where *Nellie* in tears and a gingham apron bids farewell to *Arthur* on the front porch, and then goes into the house to sob out her grief—remember that: 'sob out her grief'—on *Grandpa's* shoulder, leaving a ton of powder there, and wearing a décolleté gown—ah, Chubby, that scene is a gem!" She was laughing now.

"Well, I told you some of it would have to be done over," he pouted. "Somebody should have kept tab. I'll know better next time. Taking all the exteriors at one time and all the interiors at another, got us all balled up in the costumes. I'll admit I am to blame in part."

"You were sole director, Chubby, and I think you've turned out a masterpiece of its kind." Toby rose to her feet as the film came to an end and the lights went up.

WHILE Chubby went off to get the masterpiece, Toby waited in the projection-room, her fine mind, always busy, now teeming with a hundred ideas, the fundamental one of which she decided was sane, although its confederates were poor.

Presently Chubby returned with the film in its box.

"We might as well chuck it in the river and get it over with," he groaned, looking at Toby with dull eyes.

"Not on your life!" Miss Lonsdell cried crisply. "I'm going to do some editing—and then! Mum's the word, Chubby. Trust Uncle Toby."

CHAPTER XXII

THE night was warm. E. J. had gone up on the roof. The Tower was strangely still—for Babel; but since Chubby was not at home, the voice of his typewriter was hushed for the moment, and the lady from the Metropolitan had taken her mezzo-soprano to parts unknown for the hot weather. Eve was away; Claude was away. Quin was at 'Sconsett, basking in Cherry-tinted smiles, while the Black Sheep was paying one of his periodical duty-calls on his sister at her summer camp. Just why Ivy's violin was silent must remain a mystery along with the riddle of the Sphinx.

E. J. was swaying gently in the khaki hammock, her thoughts, it must be confessed, roaming pleasantly in and out of Bohemia, when of a sudden she was aware of a head and a pair of shoulders raising themselves through the trap-door of the roof.

"I was just thinking about you; you will skin your shins if you are not more careful how you climb," she added as David Holmes scrambled awkwardly to his feet.

He paused in the act of brushing his trousers at the knee.

"Are you—alone?" he asked, peering through the gloom. "I thought the elevator-man said—"

"The elevator-man doesn't know one from 'tother of us yet; Charon has gone back to Virginia." Her gay, sweet voice became serious. Then, rousing herself: "You must make the best of me for an hour; some of the folks will be back then. Toby's bent on very mysterious business these days. Where she goes, unless it is to the pawnbroker or divine service, I haven't an idea. Come, do make the best of me. There's something I think you ought to know, David."

E. J. made room for him beside her, extending an invitation with a little pat of her hand, but he remained standing. This appeared ominous on the face of things, and something icy seemed to grip her bare white throat. She was afraid to look at him for a minute or two; and her eyes, slightly dilated, sought the sky-line, where to the east the lights of

Broadway illuminated the heavens like a giant fire. Perhaps things would never be quite the same for her again, after this hour, for she knew David's grief, if grief was to be his portion, must forever gray her days.

"Oh, David," she cried, "I have been unfair, and I don't know what to do! Or rather, I know what I'm going to do, but—I'm breaking faith."

Then he sat down beside her and said quite simply: "Suppose we talk it over, E. J. I am your friend, you know."

"I want you for my friend." She seized his hand and gave it a little squeeze.

"Only that?"

Something in his voice made her turn quickly around and face him again, and then, in the glow of the Chinese lantern, swung directly above his head, she saw that his thin lips were smiling, almost gravely, for it was not David's way to be hilarious. Unexpected as his quiet enjoyment was, it gave her courage; and she cried out, with a sort of breathless haste:

"Oh, David, I can't help it, I really can't. I guess I don't want to, either," she added, with her simple candor. "My Massachusetts brain tells me I am doing wrong and that I ought to help it, fight it back, but my Virginia heart leaps with joy at what has happened to me—I am my own worst enemy, David. And then, I thought you didn't care."

"Didn't care?"

"Yes—for me."

It was his turn to become serious, and all the dry mirth went from his face like the light from a lantern when the candle is dead.

"You thought I didn't care for you?" he said. "What have I done to make you believe that? In what have I failed you?"

"Oh, David, you haven't failed me at all! There is no one I would turn to so quickly in trouble—no one after Toby, that is." Her eyes gleamed nearly black in their intensity and earnestness. "But you know there is a difference, somewhere, somehow, about us now; we are not the same people we were six months ago, back in Medford. It must be that I have failed you, David."

He wouldn't have it that way at all.

"I am years older than you, and I am a man. I am to blame if something has gone wrong. We have known each other since childhood."

"For hundreds and hundreds of years!" She spoke vehemently.

"Does it seem as long as that to you?" he asked, the old smile returning.

E. J. felt she was only plunging deeper and more hopelessly into the mire every minute.

"I must tell you the truth, no matter what comes of it," she said then, meeting his eyes bravely in a final effort. "I don't love you; perhaps I never did. Oh, I know I'm a beast, but I can't marry you, David—I can't!"

"You mean there is somebody else?" he asked after a pause.

"Yes. I love him very deeply."

"You mean Burton George," he said, as if stating a known fact.

"Yes, Burt. Only, he is Lewis Randall, the Lewis whom Uncle Randall cared for after his parents died. You remember? Burton George was only a stage name. He is the man I love, David."

AT one time David had thought he detected a budding romance between E. J. and the Black Sheep, but he had recognized his mistake in time, and he was not surprised at what she told him.

"So the Randall fortune will go to the Randall heir after all!" he mused. "I don't deny it is a proper solution, and your marriage caps the climax to an interesting story. You are very storybookish, E. J."

"I am very happy," she corrected, her eyes soft. "And Burt is to have the Randall legacy before we are married. I have written to the lawyer in Boston and told him I surrender in favor of the next heir at law—which sounds legal, and is Burt, of course."

David watched her out of the corners of his shrewd eyes.

"Burt is in Boston, isn't he?" he asked.

"Yes. You know Burt was at law-school when George Randall died. It was his ambition to form a partnership with Mr. Winship, but when the will was read, it knocked his plans higher

than a kite. There was a girl, too, Mr. Winship's sister. Now she has married some one else, and her brother has remembered that Burt is made of the right stuff." Her voice took on a glad note here and she repeated her last words. "Burt is made of the right stuff, David, and Mr. Winship knows it. He wrote, asking him to come up to Boston to see him. He is thinking of operating an office in New York, it seems. I think he would take Burt without a penny—not into partnership, perhaps, but place him in the New York office, for Burt is clever." She said this as if David had denied Burt's cleverness. "With a hundred thousand dollars he can go into the firm, and then—"

"And then I can go back to Medford Center, a jilted man." David smiled whimsically. But when she would have interposed, he added in a serious voice again: "And you really think Burt will accept this money from you?"

Her heart leaped at his words. "You don't?"

"Not if he's made of the right stuff," he said, repeating her description.

He never guessed the pain his words inflicted, the doubt he brought to her faithful heart. Deliberately she had done this thing as a test. A weak man would accept this sacrifice on her part.

"You know, after we are married, the money will be his," she said, after a short pause.

"No, the money will be yours, but of course he may use it," David insisted. "I like Burt. He always impressed me as being only a boy, but I think even a boy will see it in a manly light. I think he will refuse to let you surrender your legacy in his favor, E. J."

She could have hugged him for less than this.

"But I have determined to go back to Medford if necessary, or live off of Uncle Standish's money," she continued, displaying the depths of her test. "Uncle Randall said I must earn my own living in New York for a year; well, I refuse to work longer in order to benefit by his will. As next heir Burt must take the hundred thousand."

"Very good," nodded David, smiling. "You have planned well, but I am still unconvinced. When Burt finds out what you have done, he will hurry back to New York and tell you a thing or two. A chain, they tell us, is as strong as its weakest link, but a man is as strong as his love, my dear, and this man of yours loves you. Of that I am sure."

She caught his hand and brought it close to her breast.

"I love you for those words, David," she whispered. "I have hoped and prayed. Burt is weak."

"And he is flesh and blood, not chain. There, you are going to be happy, and I am glad, genuinely glad." He gave her a brotherly pat on the shoulder and stood up.

E. J. watched him closely for a second or two.

"You don't seem to mind—about me," she said at last.

"I shall have to ask Uncle Toby how a jilted lover should conduct himself."

"You don't mind, David!"

"I'm afraid I shall shed tears over my deficiency in a moment."

"You know you don't care, and what is more, I know you don't care. I believe I have a rival, and there's another girl." Under her glance he felt himself go red, although he was indifferent to that, just then. "David!" she cried severely, rising and standing beside him. "You haven't missed a day here for a week. That is why I thought it was still I—or I was still it, which? Anyway—can it be Toby?" The thought was too delicious. "Is it possible?"

"Possible and probable, both," said David.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE feverish activity of a Saturday forenoon pervaded the Tower. E. J. was packing a suitcase with her own and Toby's change of linen, for when Miss Lonsdell returned home from the office at one o'clock there would be scarcely time for a sandwich and a cup of tea before they would be obliged to rush off in order to catch the Long Island express. It had been a hot, sultry seven days, and everybody was looking forward to Eve's week-end.

In the midst of this scene Toby and

David walked in, although a hurried consultation of clocks and watches revealed the fact that she was a half-hour early.

"Oh, E. J.!" cried Toby, rushing toward her chum.

"Toby! Well?"

Over his shoulder David saw that they were in each other's arms.

"I think I'll run upstairs and see if there is anything I can do to ease the pain," he said, his eyes twinkling, and hurried off before they could stop him.

"Traitor!" shrilled Toby.

E. J. pulled her down on the box-couch beside her.

"I'm dying to hear all about it, honey," she cried.

"Really, there's very little to tell," said Toby primly. "Old maids don't have romances; they're supposed to prefer kittens and parrots and window-boxes and Mr. Chambers. David called me up at the office about noon, and asked me what time I was leaving—said he'd walk home with me, had something to say. It seemed to me his voice was not quite steady, and I haven't been conducting 'Answers and Questions' all these years without knowing what an unsteady male voice means. So I told him to come right over—I'd join him at once."

"Oh, Toby, that is romantic!"

"Well, it was rather nice, I'll admit," confessed Miss Lonsdell, smiling. "And my foolish old heart commenced to thump like a donkey-engine as I went down to meet him. Don't laugh! There have been so few hims I have ever gone to meet on my own. . . . Do you know, he's very nice, E. J."

"Yes, I believe he grows nicer every day," nodded E. J. with tilted head. "There's nobody I'd rather give him to than you, Toby."

"Thanks, darling. As a matter of fact, I had made up my mind the first time we met, down at Eve's, to have him, since it was as plain as the nose on your face that you didn't care two straws for the poor fellow. And I did—from the start. Oh, E. J., he's clever—not clever as I am, like a parrot, but clever enough to keep silent even when Ivy plays; and that, you know, is a real test; Ivy just invites sarcasm. He told me all about his paper; isn't it wonderful?"

E. J. was silent for a moment or two, looking intently at the spot in the rug where Claudia had overturned the chafing-dish, and even Uncle Toby had been unable to erase the stain.

"He told you about Medford Center?" she asked after a pause.

"I could find my way about the place in the dark! Oh, my dear, a little country town matters little to me. I came from the tall grass myself, and I am willing to go back to it, with David. We're going to work together, and of course we're going to make a success of our paper, and be very, very happy."

"I believe you are," cried E. J., giving her a brief, bearlike hug.

Some one knuckled sharply on the door, and in answer to Toby's summons, the Black Sheep's head appeared.

"Train late—be ready in ten minutes—don't start without me," he shouted breathlessly, and was off again to make a hurried change.

A rousing cheer directly above their heads sent them to their feet. E. J. opened the door and rushed into the corridor, almost upsetting a dusty, parcel-laden young woman who had just stepped from the elevator.

"I beg your pardon—Eve!" she gasped, recognizing the artist.

"I've come home," announced Miss Masters, with a long, happy sigh. "Oh, that darned country!"

CHAPTER XXIV

AN indignation meeting was called in the Masters studio to pass judgment on the Pierrotlike young person who, in a newly applied make-up, was already at work on a Derringer poster, though she had scarcely been back on Manhattan soil an hour.

"I came all the way from Maine to spend this week-end with you," protested the Black Sheep grimly, speaking first. "What is your defense?"

"Guilty, but happy again, thanky," beamed the unruffled Eve. "You may spend the evening with me instead, since you insist. I accept your invitation to dinner and the theater, Mr. Shepherd."

"A show!" gasped Chubby.

"A restaurant in this heat!" echoed Ivy, meeting her lord's eye.

"Oh, run along and crawl in your hammock," cried Miss Masters, shooing the Kute Kiddies from her sight. "You remind me of a pair of stuffed doves on a wedding-cake in a Columbus Avenue bakery window. I insist that I have a perfect right to return to New York if I want to. And I did, worse than I ever wanted anything in all my life, I guess. It is true I expected guests, but I've had enough country to last me the rest of my life. Right hand up, I'm cured."

"Chubby's got a lunch-basket packed full of good things."

"Trot 'em out; we'll devour them here."

"My hair turned gray hunting up a pair of white flannel trousers—"

"Oh, are they trousers, Andy? I thought you were garbed for a supper in some Garden of Eden drama Chubby was pulling up."

"They're my very good pants," cut in the Black Sheep indignantly.

"Eve Masters, do you recall a little heart-to-heart talk we had all by our lonesome, that day we explored your little cottage for the first time?" asked Toby, with a twinkle in her eyes. "You said—"

"Oh, spare me! I had been reading real-estate literature for a month of Sundays," protested Miss Masters. "I had reached that state of mind where I thought it was perfectly indecent not to rhapsodize about green fields and babbling brooks and skies at twilight. I thought it was nature stirring my heart, but I believe now it was something from the delicatessen man. I'm cured. I tried to stick it out, for I knew you'd guy me unmercifully. Well, laugh on. I don't care what you do as long as you give me New York."

"It's like a furnace in town; you'll miss your porch," sighed E. J.

"I prefer our roof garden with the Chinese lantern and the rubber tree."

"There's a full moon, Eve; you'll miss the moonlight on the Sound, these nights," muttered the Poet and Peasant regretfully.

"Give me the electrical display of Broadway — somebody-or-other's domestic champagne and 'tother person's embroidery silk."

"You'll miss the morning swims," thought Toby.

"I like better the marble pool at the Y. W. C. A."

"You'll miss Farmer Tooker," put in Harvey slyly.

Eve shook herself like a young cat that has just escaped from a thunder-shower, and like the cat, she began to purr contentedly now that she was home.

"My dear people," she cried, "I shall never miss anything or anybody, not even myself, as I have missed the Big Town in these last few weeks. It was not so bad when you were there with me, but even then I preferred gasoline to new-mown hay, and the hot asphalt to the cool seashore. The birds woke me up in the morning, and the crickets kept me awake at night—oh, I longed for the rhythm of the 'L' to lull me to sleep! My lease has three weeks more to run, and any of you may have the house for that time with my blessing—as well as its stock of provisions for the asking."

"Oh, Evie!"

"See here, Eve—"

The Kute Kiddies looked at each other and then at Miss Masters, and heaved a sigh of contentment at what they saw reflected in that lady's face.

"It's yours," she said. "Only, for the love o' Pete don't call me Evie again, my dears."

A LITTLE later in the day Toby Lonsdell received a telegram from Hartford which seemed to fill her with some concern until, following David's advice, she opened and read it.

"Claudia," she pronounced briefly.

"What?" asked Ivy, who was oftener in some one's else home than her own.

"Married!"

"To whom?"

"Quin, of course."

"But I thought," said David, who knew all the gossip of the Tower, "Quin was down at 'Sconsett, making love to the Cherry-lady? And surely some one said Claudia was going to marry her manager!"

"This telegram is from Claudia and says she has just married Quin; I should think she would know. As a matter of fact, when she began writing such glowing accounts of the Derringer cub's kindness and sympathy, I bundled all her letters up and sent them down to Quintin Glynn. I thought they'd fetch him, and it seems I was right, as I usually am." Ivy snorted at this, but her retort is lost to posterity, since at that moment the door flew open and Burt fairly bounced into the room.

"Where's E. J.?" he demanded after a hasty survey of the premises.

"On the roof," answered Ivy, preparing for a "crushing" exit. "Come with me!"

But Burt had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXV

BURT found E. J. on the roof, where she had gone to be alone, since this visit of his was not altogether unlooked for.

"I wondered if you'd come," she said, rising to meet him. "We are not going down to Long Island to-day. You are in luck."

He kissed her with a proprietary air.

"I had made up my mind to go down to Long Island after you," he told her quietly.

"Eve threw up the sponge. She's back in town, with enough country to last her the rest of her life."

"So I heard. But I didn't come all the way from Boston to talk about Eve Masters. E. J., I've had a visit from Lawyer Bennett."

"Well, Burt?"

She dropped down in the hammock and made room for him beside her, but he preferred to remain standing, and refused her invitation with a shake of his head.

"I think he understands me better now than you do, E. J.," he said, a deep frown darkening his countenance. "Oh, I know I am weak, almost a jellyfish, eh? But I'm not that worthless, I guess. I provided for my own bread and butter; if I can't provide for my wife's as well, then I don't deserve a wife, that's all."

"But it isn't all," cried E. J., with a trace of whimsy in her speech. "Burt, I'm not going to be jilted by you too."

"You are not, by George! I'm going to work for you." There was small token of the parasite here.

"Of course! That is what I intend, dear. You are to take the Randall legacy and buy an interest in the Winship business."

"I'll be hanged if I do, E. J.!"

"Then you are content to become a junior clerk—that's something like a head office-boy, isn't it? Oh, Burt! The money will be yours after we are married; you see, it will be quite the same whether you inherit or I! And I have Uncle Standish's fortune. I want you to be independent; a man should." She was making use of every argument she could grasp, but—she wanted to be sure.

"A man should be independent; you've said it!" he cried then. "How could I be, accepting this sacrifice from you, E. J.? Answer me that. It is a sacrifice, you know; you're simply lying down in my favor. George Randall meant for you to inherit his money; there can be no doubt of that. And you are perfectly capable of carrying out his wishes. So, I wont let you give me a hundred thousand dollars, and that's all there is to it."

"BUT it isn't all, Burt," E. J. insisted, employing her most forceful manner. "If I decide to do this thing, surrender all claim to the money and go back to Medford to live on the Standish legacy, even though I am lying down, you will have to inherit. I have written Mr. Bennett that I have tried and failed to earn my own living, unaided, for a year in New York. That is the truth. I have done my utmost to find employment of some kind—"

"While I have done my utmost to block your game," he intervened.

"That's neither here nor there. It's forgotten and forgiven, my dear," she replied gently. "I have failed. I haven't got a penny left—at least, very few of them. I can't live on air, nor on my friends. And come to think of it, all my friends are preparing to quit the sinking ship. Toby's giving herself airs

and dangling a fiancé; Claudia's married; and Ivy has been for a year. Of course there's Eve, but—it's no use, Burt. I confess myself beaten. I surrender; you inherit. Afterward, what difference will it make?"

"So much difference I wont permit you to do any such thing," he said doggedly.

"Then you are going to remain an office-boy—a head office-boy, to be sure!"

"If that's all the faith you have in me, you would have done better to have stuck to David Holmes," he retorted with rising color.

"Burt, I'm not marrying you with the idea of doing better," E. J. told him. "I love you. Are you going to let your pride—"

"It isn't exactly pride!" he burst out then. "I'm a man; you don't seem to grasp that—because I've acted like a cad and worse, I suppose. But I'd hate myself to my dying day if I accepted this money from you; and if you're the woman I think you are, you'd despise me, deep in your heart. We've got to work together, E. J. And later on, when I'm more sure of myself and the Winship business, I'll ask you to lend me the money to buy an interest in the firm. But the money will still be yours, and I will pay off the loan as quickly as I can. It isn't the same whether you inherit or I. You must write to Bennett and tell him you have reconsidered your decision."

"'How like a woman!' That's what he'll say."

"I've told him you'll write him to that effect. He knows I refuse to touch the money."

THERE was a little pause. They had said he was weak, and while every man Jack of them liked him for himself, the reputation that was his had hurt her, cutting clear to the heart, in a way which even Toby failed to guess. But now! A great joy suffused her at the masterful note in his voice. A moment more, and she was ready to surrender to him.

"And if I don't write that letter to Mr. Bennett?" she ventured at last.

He set his jaw firmly.

"I shall go away; I shall never willingly see you again," he replied.

"And all for pride! How big is your love, Burt?"

He took a step toward her and clasped her hands with his own. In this fashion he said:

"It isn't stubbornness; it isn't pride: it's you and I. And because you and I are what we are, and things have happened,—which you have forgotten and forgiven,—you must let me use my judgment now. I can't marry you if you insist on giving up this money to me; more, I will never touch a penny of it. As for not loving you! I've read of it in books, and seen it in plays, and heard it on lips, but I never thought it could mean what you mean to me. That's all. Only, I do love you!"

She could hold out no longer then; and she was satisfied. Simply and without ado she kissed him.

"You will have to help me find a job, my dear, and I'm not sure we hadn't better call in *Mr. Sherlock Holmes*. I've combed the town myself."

THIS was the moment that Miss Lonsdell chose to come crawling through the trapdoor, looking like anything else in the world than a fairy godmother; but this she called herself, and exhibited many airs and graces and sundry pats on the back in the bargain.

"She'll never be the same again now that she's hooked David right from under my nose," sighed E. J., preparing to listen.

Toby drew up a tabouret, removed the rubber plant and sat down.

"I trust I'm not keeping you up," she murmured as Burt concealed a yawn. Toby was a good scout, and yet he rather resented this intrusion. Miss Lonsdell, however, was full of her own importance, and began referring to a letter in her hand. "It concerns Chubby's wonderful masterpiece, 'Beyond the City—Chaos.' I have just closed a deal with the Mohr chain of theaters by which the picture will be seen in every 'pop' house in Greater New York. And there will be others, of course," she added.

"But Chubby told me confidentially that the film was a frost," spoke up

E. J., as Toby artfully paused, in the manner of a vaudeville artist, to permit applause.

"It's a wise father that knows his own child after Uncle Toby gets in his work," snapped Miss Lonsdell. "As a drama Chubby's picture had a Keystone looking like an amateur circus; but as a comic—say! I edited the darn thing myself, rewriting all the leaders, and that, with our acting and Chubby's directing, not to mention the 'script in the first place—simply a scream, my dear. When I arranged for a private showing, the Mohr representative nearly had an attack of apoplexy. I signed him then and there. We'll all be millionaires yet. Don't tell the Black Sheep, but a most critical critic confided in me that Harvey had it on the only Charlie."

"Toby, you're stringing us," Burt cried, not exactly relishing this interruption. "Talk sense for a moment—come down to earth. You know all about Uncle Randall's story-book will? Well, E. J. must inherit, simply must, but she says she's without an engagement, without prospects, even. In other words she wants to chuck the whole thing. Now, you—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" burst in Toby, in her clear, crisp accents. "E. J. needs neither engagement nor prospects; what are you crying about? Haven't I been telling you about our picture, and hasn't E. J. stock in the concern? All of ten dollars, yes. My doing! This investment is going to yield vast returns, my dear children, and you, E. J., may play lady of leisure until the cows come home—which is next March, isn't it? Don't come downstairs yet; there's a tip. Bedlam's broke loose among the Kute Kiddies. He's been offered a directorship with the Komic Komedy Kompany on the strength of his 'side-splitting masterpiece' just released; and there's something else—but Ivy will have to tell you that herself. At least, she's not to return to Rosalie's, and they're going to move to the country—if you conscientiously can call the suburbs of Jersey City country. I always held that New York was no place to raise children myself."

"AND that's settled," said Burt a moment later, when they were alone again.

"Yes, dear boy." Her happiness seemed complete.

"By the way, what is your name, E. J.? Does anyone know?" he asked after a brief silence. His face was grave.

"I do," she flashed.

"Oh, yes. But—"

"The aunts do. It was the aunts dubbed me E. J. See if you can guess."

"Lord, I can't; I don't want to. You tell me. I want to listen to your voice, dear girl."

"What a perfectly rash want!" she teased.

"I always thought it must be something quite dreadful, like—like Eliza Jane, say. . . . . Oh, isn't that dreadful? I thought it was. Excuse, darling."

"All our very best actresses are called Jane nowadays," she told him severely, "and Eliza sounds like ancestors, and so few of us have grandmammas and great-aunts any more. Medford Center would have loved Eliza Jane too. Guess again."

He shook his head. "Give it up. Go on talking, please."

"I'm not a Toby that squeaks." But she was as pleased as a child with her secret. "You see, Mother was very romantic and quite a bit stage-struck, with Mary Anderson her idol," she said, her gay young face alive with happiness. "To be sure, Mother was only a slip of a girl when Mary Anderson retired, but she never forgot her. And when I came, I was called for two of our Mary's favorite characters—I've heard the story a hundred times—Evadne Juliet. . . . . The aunts couldn't be expected to call me Juliet, of course—it's from a play; but for a little while I was known as Evadne, which, somehow, I think Aunt Grace decided was biblical, like Naomi, you know. Somebody must have enlightened them." She sighed. "I've been E. J. ever since."

"I can't imagine your being anything else!" said her lover stoutly.

THE END

Your chance to *be somebody*, to hold a position of responsibility, to have an income that will provide every comfort of life, is within your reach.

Just one thing keeps you from finding it, grasping it: you're not *prepared*. Through the door of opportunity big jobs are waiting in every field of work. But only trained men will get them.

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Choose your own career. The I. C. S. will train you for the position you want in the work you like best. And you need not lose a day or a dollar in your present occupation.

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I. C. S., Box 2426 Scranton, Pa.

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In October, 1916, the International Correspondence Schools will celebrate the completion of 25 years of successful educational work in the interest of technical and industrial preparedness. More than 130,000 men and women are NOW STUDYING I.C.S. Courses, preparing for advancement and increased earnings and greater service to their employers and their country.

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☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ DESIGNER
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ BOOKKEEPER
☐ Gas Engineer	☐ Stenographer and Typist
☐ CIVIL ENGINEER	☐ Cert. Public Accountant
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A little time, Effecto, and *presto*, your car looks like new! Made in seven colors. Clear Varnish and Top and Seat Dressing. Sold by paint, hardware and auto accessory dealers. Send for Color Card. Pratt & Lambert-Inc. 157 Tonawanda St., Buffalo, N. Y. In Canada, 103 Courtwright St., Bridgeburg, Ontario.

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Don't try to quit the tobacco habit unaided. It's a losing fight against heavy odds and means a serious shock to the nervous system. Let the tobacco habit quit YOU. It will quit you, if you will just take **Tobacco Redeemer,** according to directions for two or three days. It is a most marvelously quick and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

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Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It makes not a particle of difference how long you have been using tobacco, how much you use or in what form you use it—whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff, **Tobacco Redeemer** will **positively** banish every trace of desire in from 48 to 72 hours. This we absolutely guarantee in every case or money refunded.

Write today for our free booklet showing the deadly effect of tobacco upon the human system and **positive proof** that **Tobacco Redeemer** will quickly free you of the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company,
Dept. 308 St. Louis, Mo.

Classified Advertising Department

RATE:—$1.00 per line—cash with order.
No advertisement of less than 4 lines or more than 12 lines accepted.

The September issue will appear on August 1st. Forms close in Chicago July 15th, by which time order, copy, and remittance must be in our hands.

THE STORY-PRESS CORPORATION

North American Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

WANTED—Stories, articles, poems for new magazine. We pay on acceptance. Handwritten MSS. acceptable. Submit MSS. to COSMOS MAGAZINE, 1277 Stewart Bldg., Washington, D. C.

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FREE FOR SIX MONTHS—My special offer to introduce my magazine, "Investing for Profit." It is worth $10 a copy to any one who has not acquired sufficient money to provide necessities and comforts for self and loved ones. It shows how to become richer quickly and honestly. Investing for Profit is the only progressive financial journal and has the largest circulation in America. It shows how $100 grows to $2,200; write now and I'll send it six months free.
H. L. Barber,
409, 20 W. Jackson Boulevard, Chicago.

WYOMING OIL DERRICK, sample copy free. Gives latest information concerning these wonderful fields.
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AGENTS—500% PROFIT. FREE SAMPLE Gold and Silver Sign Letters for store fronts and office windows. Anyone can put on. Big demand everywhere. Write today for liberal offer to agents. Metallic Letter Co., 411 N. Clark, Chicago, U. S. A.

DO YOU WANT a sure job with big pay, easy hours and rapid advance? Write for my big Free book, DW 43, which tells you how you can get a good Government position.
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AGENTS—200% profit. Wonderful little article. Sells like wildfire. Can be carried in pocket. Write at once for free sample.
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OLD COINS WANTED

SAVE all odd-looking money and stamps and send only 4c for Large Illustrated Coin and Stamp Circular. It may mean much profit to you. We pay cash for all rare coins, bills and stamps. Send now.
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PATENTS—Write for HOW TO OBTAIN A PATENT. List of Patent Buyers and Inventions Wanted. $1,000,000 in prizes offered for inventions. Send sketch for free opinion as to patentability. Our Four Guide Books sent free upon request. We assist Inventors to sell their inventions. Victor J. Evans & Co., Patent Attys., 696 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

WANTED—AN IDEA! WHO CAN THINK OF SOME SIMPLE thing to patent? Protect your ideas, they may bring you wealth. Write for "Needed Inventions," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money."
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INVENT SOMETHING; YOUR IDEAS may bring wealth; free book tells what to invent and how to obtain a patent, through our credit system.
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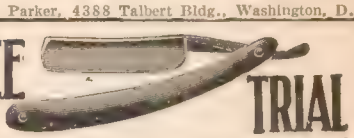

Cut out this ad and mail it to us, with your name and address (no money); and we will send you our **FAMOUS KARNAK RAZOR** by return mail, postpaid. You may use the razor for 30 days **FREE**; then, if you like it, pay us $1.85. If you don't like it return it. **SEND NO MONEY.**
MORE COMPANY. 504 More Building, St. Louis, Mo.

ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE

The Antiseptic Powder to Shake Into Your Shoes

And sprinkle in the Foot-Bath. One war relief committee reports, that of all the things sent out last year in their Comfort Bags or "Kits," Allen's Foot-Ease received the most praise from the soldiers. The British and French troops, and our troops on the Mexican border use it, because it takes the Friction from the Shoe and freshens the feet. Why not order a dozen or more packages to-day from your dealer to mail to your friends in training camps and in the navy. Sold by Druggists and Department stores everywhere. 25c. **Don't accept any substitute.**
FREE TRIAL PACKAGE sent by mail.
Address, **ALLEN S. OLMSTED, Le Roy, N. Y.**

Why Some Foods Explode in the Stomach

By WILLIAM ELDRIDGE

"THE combinations of food that most people eat three times a day inflict nothing less than a crime against their health and are the direct cause of 90% of all sickness."

This is the rather startling statement of Eugene Christian, the famous New York Food Scientist, whose wonderful system of corrective eating is receiving so much eager attention throughout the Nation at the present time.

According to Eugene Christian we eat without any thought of the relation which one food has to another when eaten at the same time. The result is that often we combine two foods each of great value in itself but which when combined in the stomach literally explode, liberating toxics which are absorbed by the blood and form the root of nearly all sickness, the first indications of which are acidity, fermentation, gas, constipation, and many other sympathetic ills leading to most serious consequences.

According to Christian, all of this can be avoided if we would only pay a little attention to the selection of our daily menus instead of eating without any regard for the consequences.

This does not mean that it is necessary to eat foods we don't like; instead Christian prescribes meals which are twice as delicious as those to which we are accustomed. Neither does he suggest proprietary or patented foods—he simply tells us which foods when eaten together produce health and energy by removing the cause of sickness.

Not long ago I was fortunate enough to be present when Eugene Christian was relating some of his experiences with corrective eating to a group of men interested in dietetics, and I was literally amazed at what he accomplished with food alone and without drugs or medicines of any kind.

One case which sticks in my mind was that of a mother and daughter who went to him for treatment. The mother was forty pounds overweight and her physician diagnosed her case as Bright's Disease. She had a sluggish liver, low blood pressure and lacked vitality. The daughter had an extreme case of stomach acidity and intestinal fermentation, was extremely nervous, had chronic constipation, and was 30 pounds underweight.

Christian prescribed the proper food combinations for each. Within a few weeks all symptoms had disappeared, and within three months the mother had lost 33 pounds and the daughter had gained 26 pounds, and both were in perfect health—normal in every particular.

Another case which interested me greatly was that of a young man whose efficiency had been practically wrecked through stomach acidity, fermentation and constipation resulting in physical sluggishness which was naturally reflected in his ability to use his mind. He was twenty pounds underweight when he first went to see Christian and was so nervous he couldn't sleep. Stomach and intestinal gases were so severe that they caused irregular heart action and often fits of great mental depression. As Christian describes it he was not 50% efficient either mentally or physically. Yet in a few days, by following Dr. Christian's suggestions as to food, his constipation had completely gone, although he had formerly been in the habit of taking large daily doses of a strong cathartic. In five weeks every abnormal symptom had disappeared—his weight having increased 6 pounds. In addition to this he acquired a store of physical and mental energy so great in comparison with his former self as to almost belie the fact that it was the same man.

But perhaps the most interesting case that Christian told me of was that of a multi-millionaire—a man 70 years old who had been traveling with his doctor for several years in a search for health. He was extremely emaciated, had chronic constipation, lumbago and rheumatism. For over twenty years he had suffered with stomach and intestinal trouble which in reality was superaciduous secretions in the stomach. The first menus given him were designed to remove the causes of acidity, which was accomplished in about thirty days. And after this was done he seemed to undergo a complete rejuvenation. His eyesight, hearing, taste and all of his mental faculties became keener and more alert. He had had no organic trouble—but he was starving to death from malnutrition and decomposition—all caused by the wrong selection and combination of foods. After six months' treatment this man was as well and strong as he had ever been in his life.

These instances of the efficacy of right eating I have simply chosen at random from perhaps a dozen Eugene Christian told me of, every one of which was fully as interesting and they applied to as many different ailments. Surely this man Christian is doing a great work.

I know of several instances where rich men and women have been so pleased with what he has done for them that they have sent him checks for $500 to $1,000 in addition to the amount of the bill when paying him.

There have been so many inquiries from all parts of the United States from people seeking the benefit of Eugene Christian's advice and whose cases he is unable to handle personally that he has written a course of little lessons which tell you exactly what to eat for health, strength and efficiency. This course is published by The Corrective Eating Society of New York.

These lessons—there are 24 of them—contain actual menus for breakfast, luncheon and dinner, curative as well as corrective, covering every condition of health and sickness from infancy to old age and for all occupations, climates and seasons.

Reasons are given for every recommendation based upon actual results secured in the author's many years of practice, although technical terms have been avoided. Every point is explained so clearly that there can be no possible misunderstanding.

With these lessons at hand it is just as though you were in personal contact with the great food specialist, because every possible point is so thoroughly covered that you can scarcely think of a question which isn't answered. You can start eating the very things that will produce the increased physical and mental energy you are seeking the day you receive the lessons and you will find that you secure results with the first meal.

If you would like to examine these 24 Little Lessons in Corrective Eating simply write The Corrective Eating Society, Inc., Dept. 1207, 443 Fourth Ave., New York City. It is not necessary to enclose any money with your request. Merely ask them to send the lessons on five days' trial with the understanding that you will either return them within that time or remit $3, the small fee asked.

The reason that the Society is willing to send the lessons on free examination without money in advance is because they want to remove every obstacle to putting this knowledge in the hands of the many interested people as soon as possible, knowing full well that a test of some of the menus in the lessons themselves are more convincing than anything that can possibly be said about them.

Please clip out and mail the following form instead of writing a letter, as this is a copy of the official blank adopted by the Society and will be honored at once

---

CORRECTIVE EATING SOCIETY, Inc.
Dept. 1207, 443 Fourth Avenue, New York City

You may send me a prepaid copy of Corrective Eating in 24 Lessons. I will either remail them to you within five days after receipt or send you $3.

Name ---------- Address ----------

City ---------- State ----------

Nothing to do but get well!

THIS is the story of a young man who was very wise. He knew that one man in seven is killed or hurt each year. He thought it possible that he might be that one. He also knew how little it cost to protect himself, so he sent a coupon like this.

Then came that rainy day when he was battling against the wind crossing the street—and a skidding automobile broke his leg. His income was taken care of. When he is able to return to work his brain will be rested and not over-wrought with worry over debts.

His children are taken care of. His wife doesn't have to worry about money. Profit by his example. Be wise—

ÆTNA-IZE

Each morning as you leave the house remember this, that you cannot tell if you will ever return. Think of it—**one man in seven is killed or hurt in an accident each year.** It is like going to war each day with your Fate.

If you are the one in seven, what will become of you, what will become of your wife, and your children? **It will be too late to think of them then. Think of them now, while you can.** Send this coupon and find out how for $25 a year, in "Preferred" occupation, this policy brings:

$5,000 to $10,000 for accidental death or loss of two limbs or eyes. Add $500 to $1,000 to this for every year you renew the insurance up to five years. Half the above for loss of one hand, foot or eye. In addition $50 a week as long as you live if you're disabled by railway, steamship or burning building accident. $25 a week as long as you live if you're disabled by any other accident.

Make sure of an income now for the bad weather days that are bound to come in the life of every man. **Send this coupon today.**

ÆTNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

Drawer 1341 HARTFORD, CONN.

The largest company in the world writing Life, Accident, Health and Liability Insurance.

Agency opportunities for all Casualty and Bonding lines

An Ætna Agent has a national advertising campaign working for *him* all the time

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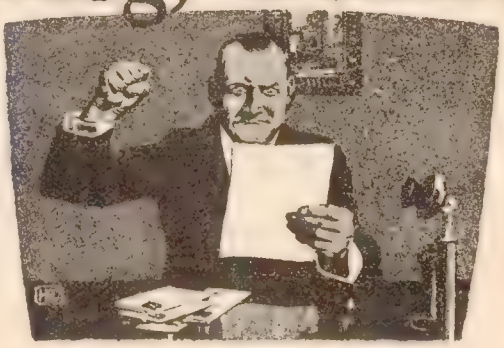
ÆTNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY, HARTFORD, CONN.
Drawer 1341
I have marked the kinds of insurance I wish to know about: ☐ Accident ☐ Health ☐ Disability ☐ $50 Life Certificate. My age is..... years. I am in good health.

12

An Apology Demanded—!

Would You Have Made It?



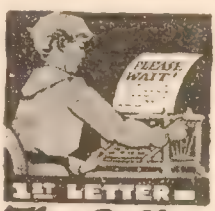
The idea for this advertisement was suggested to us by a prominent Fire-Chief, who was consulted as to the truth of assertions made in the "brutal truth" letter.

THE GENERAL MACHINERY CO.
WASHINGTON, MASS.
TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS, SMITH BROS. BLDG.
(Name and address fictitious)

February 11, 1917.

To Our Friends and Customers:

We regret to inform you that yesterday our plant suffered from disastrous fire. Our loss is fully covered by insurance, and business will be resumed with as little delay as possible.



Meanwhile, for two or three months, pending rebuilding, etc., we are obliged to ask the kind indulgence of our customers in the matter of deliveries and the fulfilment of contracts. We solicit, also, the co-operation of our friends in restoring our records, part of which have been destroyed by the conflagration.

We ask our friends to stand by us in the day of our misfortune, and we assure them that we will put forth the most strenuous effort night and day to resume our manufacturing facilities.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) T. KENDRICK, *President.*

P. S.: Edwards Manufacturing Co.—Above explains itself. Two loaded cars intended for you were destroyed on the siding. Also about three carloads of goods in process. Will give you first attention when we get going again.—Tough luck, wasn't it?

EDWARDS MANUFACTURING CO.
EDWARDSVILLE, N. Y.
(Name and address fictitious)

February 12, 1917.

The General Machinery Co.,
Temporary Headquarters,
Smith Brothers' Building,
Washington, Mass.

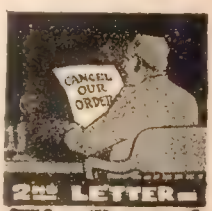
Gentlemen:

We received your letter of the 11th inst., with the story that your plant had been destroyed by fire, and that it will be months before we can expect delivery from you.

You seem to think it is just a case of "tough luck" on your part, and that we should take it good-naturedly.

But we don't see it that way.

Failure to get supplies from you will put our farm dairy-equipment business out of joint for weeks, while we are getting supplies elsewhere.



We took it for granted you had an up-to-date plant where a thing of this kind would be impossible. It certainly would be impossible in our plant, as in most of the other plants we deal with. For our plant and every other up-to-date plant we ever heard of is protected against the danger of a general fire by an automatic sprinkler system.

[Was this sweeping assertion justified? Read the Fire-Chief's conclusions, next page.]

To speak the brutal truth, this fire seems to us to betray sheer neglect of an elementary precaution on your part.

We have been satisfied in all other respects with your handling of our interests, and later we shall be glad to do business with you—providing you have properly safeguarded your business and your customers against another interruption by fire.

In the meantime, we shall be obliged to have our orders filled elsewhere. Please accept this, therefore, as a cancellation of all orders, including those for June delivery.

Very truly yours,

T. O. EDWARDS, *President.*

MERRIC MACHINERY CO.
AIMESBURY, OHIO
(Name and address fictitious)

February 12, 1916.

Edwards Manufacturing Company,
Edwardsville, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

The newspapers report the destruction by fire of the plant of the General Manufacturing Company, and I assume, therefore, that you are in the market for quick deliveries of certain materials which I think we are prepared to furnish. I have telegraphed our New York agent, Mr. Miller, to see you at once, and you may expect him on the same day you receive this letter. We trust you will favor us with a three-year or five-year contract under specifications we recently bid on. We have recently installed screens and special dies for this class of work and could be virtually a branch of your own business. Furthermore—

Business is Business!!

We have automatic-sprinkler protection and any interruption by fire is practically impossible.

Very truly yours,

E. D. JACKSON, *President.*

Should Edwards Apologize?

Sometimes the coolest-headed man "blows up" when he sees his plans upset and his promises broken through no fault of his own. But Mr. Edwards was within the truth and he doesn't need to apologize. The Fire-Chief who was consulted proved that in the farm-machinery industry practically all of the large plants are protected by automatic sprinklers. Many other industries are equally protected—woodworking, leather-working, textile, paper, etc.

The function of automatic-sprinkler protection is to keep your *going* business going! Ordinary insurance does not cover the havoc and demoralization and loss involved in the mere suspension of business. No well-run business can afford to take the chance.

Sprinklers reduce the insurance rate 40 per cent. to 90 per cent. or more. As reducers of rates and hazards they rank ahead of fireproof construction.

Through companies that specialize in such matters you can arrange to let the Grinnell System be paid for in annual instalments out of its own savings, if desired.

There are several kinds of sprinklers which pass the requirements of the underwriters. The Grinnell is the standard and the best. It protects more property than all other kinds put together. We build your whole system to measure in our shops, leaving a minimum of work to do on your premises, and we take responsibility for the entire system.

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At two months, Master Adrian Theil weighed a little over 6 lbs. Then the doctor advised Eskay's Food. His picture shows him before he was nine months old—a bouncing, healthy child of 24 lbs. "I have the greatest confidence in your food," writes his mother, Mrs. A. A. Thiel, of Oakland, Cal.

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Send me large sample can of Eskay's Food and book, "How to Care for the Baby," both postpaid and without charge.

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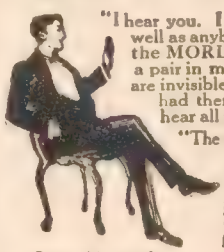

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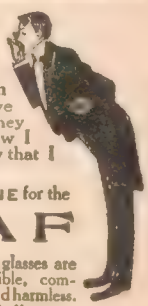

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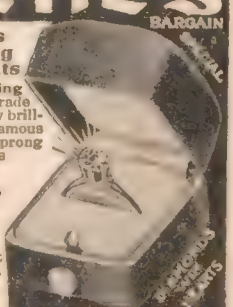

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And why? Because the delicious natural flavor has been developed and brought out by toasting (roasting.)

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Nestlé's Food

A complete milk food—not a milk modifier.

YOU mothers—who are reading this—you know that raw cows' milk is no substitute for mother's milk. You know how hard it is to get cows' milk clean and pure. You know how hard it is to get the milk fresh enough—and even when you know the cow from which the milk comes—even though you follow it every step of the way—even when you think that there are no germs in the milk—even then that milk is hard to digest because of the curd—the hard, white, rubber-like curd.

But there is much that is good in milk—much that your baby needs. So in Nestle's Food we take the pure milk of healthy cows and modify and change it so that it is the nearest thing to mother's milk. It is reduced to a dry powder and is put in air-tight cans.

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So, in the hot summer days, when summer diarrhoea takes thousands of babies each year from mothers' arms, keep your baby safe. With Nestle's your baby will pass serenely through the hot and weary summer. With Nestle's your baby will gain weight as he should.

Send this coupon for a package of twelve feedings, so that you can start your baby on Nestle's before the hot weather comes. Send the coupon also for the big, free 96 page book by baby specialists telling you how to take care of your baby—and answering a thousand puzzling questions.

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HE is the one great historian whom this war has developed.

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It is not given to many generations to see history in the making, to see civilization hammering out the world's story on the forge of life.

This is the war of a world—sixteen nations are fighting on a dozen battlefields—fleets, airships are here, there, everywhere. Every nation of the sixteen has its own political troubles. And beneath all lie the economic problems that will decide the war. Snatches of each aspect have reached you. One man has told you of this, another of that. But Frank Simonds holds the knowledge of it all in the hollow of his hand. **The perplexities and complexities unfold before you in his lucid style, so that you too have a grip on this world's war.**

Calmly, dispassionately, from this side of the ocean, yet out of the very turmoil and noise of the conflict, he is writing this history. It will be finished after the war is finished, but the first volume is ready now. There will be at least five volumes. **This is the *only* history of this war written by Frank Simonds.**

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A part of each volume will be written by famous men in the different nations at war—each telling of the thing he has seen himself that knows best. Never has there been a historical work with such a group of international contributors. There is no room to name them all here. Here are a few:

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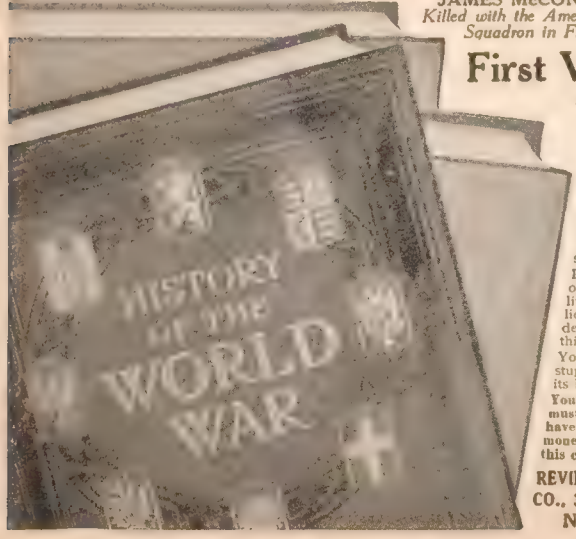

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Here before you is the astounding spectacle of 105,000,000 people ready to sacrifice their lives and their money for a cause. They believe that this is the great fight for real democracy, that out of the fiery furnace of this war, a greater world will rise.

You must know the truth about this stupendous thing. You must see into its heart.

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This is the first detective-story novel Anna Katharine Green has written in several years. It is the best she has ever written. It deals with the murder of a beautiful girl whose lifeless body was found on the marble floor of the most famous art museum in New York. An Indian arrow had pierced her heart. There were sixteen other people in the building at the time. Which of them shot the hasty arrow?

This is only one of the many distinctive features in the July issue of THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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When the Oliver Nine was priced at $100 over half of it was spent in selling you the machine. That we found out in 22 years of selling. Some of it went to salaries and commissions for 15,000 salesmen and agents—some was necessary to pay the rent of 50 expensive offices. Tradeouts and a dozen other costly and wasteful practices demanded their share.

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We ship an Oliver Nine to you for five days' free trial. Use it in your office or at home. Try it out without anyone to influence you.

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That is the entire plan. Simple, isn't it? You are the sole judge. At no time during the trial are you under the slightest obligation to buy. We will even refund transportation charges if you decide not to keep it. This is not a cheap machine in any particular — except the price.

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You Can Tell the People Who Have Iron in Their Blood—Strong, Healthy, Vigorous Folks

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If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. There is nothing like good old iron to put color in your cheeks and sound, healthy flesh on your bones. But you must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated like nuxated iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron recommended above by Dr. E. Sauer, is one of the newer organic iron compounds. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy, in nearly all forms if indigestion, as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The Manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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They tell all about game farming—the profit and pleasure to be obtained from it. "Game Farming for Profit and Pleasure" is sent free on request. It treats of the subject as a whole, describes the many game birds, tells of their food and habits, etc. "American Pheasant Breeding and Shooting" is sent on receipt of 10c. in stamps. It is a complete manual on the subject.

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Just try mixing "Bull" Durham with your favorite pipe tobacco.— It's like sugar in your coffee

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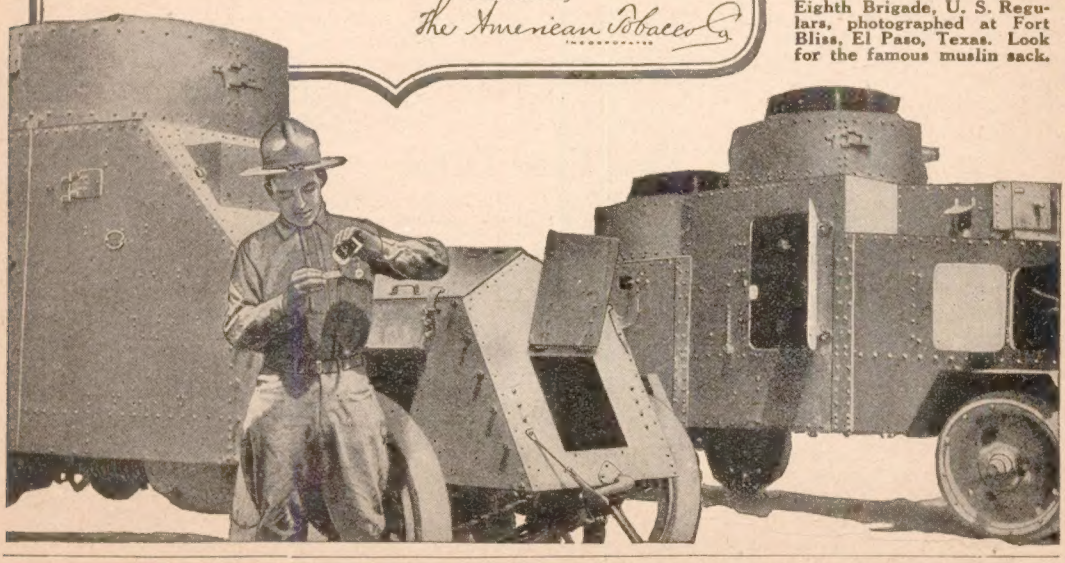

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"When my complexion was red, rough and unsightly, I was so *ashamed* that I never had any fun. I imagined that people avoided me—perhaps they *did!* But the regular use of Resinol Soap—with a little Resinol Ointment just at first—has given me back my clear, healthy skin. I *wish* you'd try it!"

The soothing, restoring influence that makes this possible is the *Resinol* which Resinol Soap contains and which physicians prescribe so extensively, in Resinol Ointment, for the treatment of skin affections.

Resinol Soap contains no harsh, drying alkali, and is not artificially colored, its rich brown being entirely due to its Resinol medication.

Sold by all druggists. For sample cake, free, with miniature box of Resinol Ointment, write to Dept. 31-C, Resinol, Baltimore.

Resinol Soap is excellent for the hair, in the bath, and for a baby's tender skin.

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Demand the genuine by full name—
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